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YEAR OF RECKONING



G WARD PRICE

YEAR OF RECKONING

By

G. WARD PRICE

Author of "I Know these Dictators," etc.



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BACKGROUND

BEING a journalist, I am always working against time. The production of this book was no exception to that rule.

In its early chapters I dealt with certain things to come. Before I reached the later ones, some of these had already to be dealt with in the past tense.

On May 1, 1939, my MS. is complete. Before its publication several weeks must elapse. In the present "Year of Reckoning" events are moving so swiftly that this brief interval may give a new turn to the situation.

Yet, whatever developments occur in the action of the drama, its fundamental theme remains unchanged.

It is the underlying facts, trends, objectives and principles that I have tried to define and analyse in the following pages. They are the key to our future fate.

Neglect of such indications in the past has brought about the situation connoted by the title of this book. Compulsory military service; unprecedented peace-time taxation; stagnant stock-markets; slack business and universal anxiety make up the reckoning of failure to grapple earlier with the greatest development of this century—the renewal of Germany's claim to domination in Europe.

Contact with the men and conditions responsible for that challenge has given me unusual opportunities of realizing its formidable nature.

From the first it was clear that the relations between the Nazi Government and Britain would be the chief factor in deciding whether the issue would be settled in peace or by war.

I have always tried to set out the views and aims of the National Socialist leaders clearly and impartially, hoping in this way to contribute to an understanding between two countries capable, in co-operation, of achieving so much. Whatever the faults of the Nazi regime, such a development would have been preferable to the present drift towards war.

The internal action of the totalitarian States, however, caused them to be kept at arm's length by the Western Powers. This policy was intensified by the aggressive and abusive attitude publicly adopted by the German Government.

The possibility of cordial relations has now passed away. It remains only to consider the factors and forces of the opposing alignment which has taken its place.

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YEAR OF RECKONING

CHAPTER I

WHAT GERMANY WANTS

ONE evening in May, 1938, I sat at dinner in Karlsbad, then in Czecho-Slovakia, with a friend of Adolf Hitler's. Except for ourselves, the restaurant was empty, for the Sudeten troubles and the mobilization a few days earlier of part of the Czech army on the frontier had stopped the influx of tourists and "cure-guests" into that pleasant town.

The band, being German and dutiful, was playing loudly to the vacant tables, almost drowning our voices. Such conditions are to be preferred for talking politics anywhere in Central Europe to-day.

My companion and I were discussing the prospects of a German occupation of the Sudetenland before the end of 1938. We agreed that it was extremely likely, and that the only uncertain elements of the situation were whether the Czech Government would resist, and, if so, whether the result would be a European war.

This led to conjecture as to where the new frontier would be drawn. I maintained that the Nazi Government would not want to carry it beyond the *Sprachgrenze* or language-boundary.

"You are wrong," said my companion. "The Führer says that Prague is historically a German city, much too good to be left to people like the Czechs."

"But you can't take Prague without taking the 7,000,000 Czechs who live around it," I objected, "—and the Nazi race-principle disqualifies them for German nationality."

"They will become second-class inhabitants of Germany," was the reply. "Czechs will not be eligible to serve in the army, for instance, though they may be conscripted for auxiliary labour service. Otherwise they will be left to develop their country under German protection."

All through the following summer the tension between Czecho-Slovakia and Germany grew. Then came the crisis of the autumn, ending in a solution apparently accepted by all parties.

As I listened on the wireless to Herr Hitler's Sport Palace speech of September 26, I heard him say:

"When the Czechs have come to an understanding with their minorities, I shall not be interested in the Czech State any more, and, so far as I am concerned, I can guarantee it. We do not want Czechs any more."

The forecast of my Karlsbad companion seemed further than ever from fulfilment. Yet during the winter, as German penetration of Czecho-Slovakia developed, in the form of arrangements to transport goods without Customs examination and to build an extra-territorial road across her territory, I began to credit the private report rather than the public statement of Herr Hitler's intentions.

Onlookers sometimes see most of the game. On Friday, March 10, before the first signs of the sudden German action against Prague had arisen, I was discussing at a luncheon-party in London the probability of a German annexation of Bohemia before the end of the month, at a time when not even the highest members of the German Government had any such expectation—or otherwise Marshal Goering would not have been playing tennis at San Remo. This was not

due to any inside information but to common-sense consideration of the facts.

That Herr Hitler had always intended to bring the Czech provinces within the Reich is certain. It was only Mr. Chamberlain's intervention which prevented him from doing so at the autumn crisis of 1938. I am convinced, however, that the date for the fulfilment of this scheme was not fixed in advance. It occurred when it did as another instance of Herr Hitler's genius for swiftly exploiting an opportunity—provided in this case by the Czech President's dismissal of the Slovak Premier on the ground that he had failed to counteract the Separatist Movement in Slovakia.

At a quarter past six on the morning of Wednesday, March 15, the telephone by my bedside rang and a voice from *The Daily Mail* office said: "We have just heard that German troops crossed the Czech frontier at six o'clock this morning." (An hour's difference in time between Germany and England accounts for the apparently instantaneous transmission of the news.)

That moment opened a new chapter in European history. It was the first step, unjustified by any racial argument, towards the foundation of a German "Empire of Europe" intended ultimately to embody all the States lying between the Eastern frontier of Germany and the shores of the Black and Caspian Seas.

Germany does not necessarily mean to annex the whole of this territory, but she intends to dominate it. Leading Germans, visualizing the future Empire of their dreams, compare it with the British Commonwealth of Nations. In doing so, they leave out of account the fact that, in the British Dominions, with the exception of South Africa, the population is predominantly of British stock, and that, in any case, the British Government exercises no control over their affairs.

When the "New World Order" which they believe

themselves to be creating is complete, Germans say there will be five great World-Empires:

The British World Empire;

The "Monroe Doctrine" Empire of North and South America;

The French Colonial Empire;

The Russo-Asiatic Empire;

The new German European Empire.

In their view, this represents an equitable distribution of world-power, with which they assert that Germany will be content.

It is noticeable that no place is reserved in the list for the Japanese or the Italian Empire. Italy does not stand high in the German scale of international values. The Germans regard their Italian and Japanese allies in much the same light as Cæsar considered the auxiliaries skirmishing on his flanks. It is in her own legions that Germany puts her trust.

Five days after Germany had embodied 7,000,000 Czechs within the frontiers of the Reich, Herr von Ribbentrop, the Foreign Minister, expounded to me as we sat alone at supper in the Hotel Kaiserhof, in Berlin, the philosophical background of the policy upon which his country had so manifestly and energetically embarked.

"Your statesmen should do what Hitler is always urging us to do," he said, "and look at this thing from the standpoint of posterity. Their mistake is that they get excited about the details of a great world-process whose true character they as yet fail to understand.

"It is natural and inevitable that a great people like the Germans should expand. The British Empire has developed until it owns one-quarter of the entire earth. We are more modest; we want only to assure our necessary living space, and when the process is complete, you will find that it is not nearly such a bad thing as it now seems

to you. Of course we want our colonies back. In the past the British people have been through other experiences which upset them quite as much as the present expansion of Germany. When these developments receded into history, you discovered that they had not damaged your interests nearly as much as you expected. You learned not only to put up with them but even to approve of them.

"What Germany is doing now represents the fulfilment of a political evolution, and if you could only get it into proper historical perspective and look at it from the point of view of posterity, you would realize how natural, inevitable and irresistible it is.

"It is a quite natural and unavoidable process that Germany's small neighbour States to the East and South-East should come into line with her, especially from the economic standpoint. In a period whose outstanding feature is an intense development of means of communication, it is a quite natural evolution that the relations between Germany and these countries should become progressively closer and should thus come to constitute a special sphere of interest in that region of Europe. . . .

"We Germans have set our hands to this task because we are destined and fitted to fulfil it. Whether you approve of it or not, you cannot prevent it. If you are unable to agree to the steps which Germany is taking, the best thing for Britain to do is to keep out of our way. Stick to your path and leave us to follow ours. Fate has called Britain to be the centre of a great world-Empire. We do not interfere in the internal affairs of that Empire, and we do not recognize your right to interfere with Germany's natural evolution. Only if you realize this, will the understanding which the Führer always wanted become possible."

The Minister leant back in his chair and looked over the balustrade of the broad balcony on to the hall of the Kaiserhof below. It was after midnight, and the uniformed

Nazi officials from various parts of Germany who make it their headquarters when in Berlin, and sit there with their heads bent close together in political conversation over coffee-cups or beer-glasses, had mostly gone to bed. Like them, Herr von Ribbentrop was in uniform. He was wearing the costume of the highest rank of the German Diplomatic Service, a black dress with silver badges, very like that of the S.S. Guards.

The Minister continued his argument in justification of Germany's Eastward expansion. "If the members of the British Government read history, they must know that the Greater German Reich is not a new invention of National Socialism, but an institution much older than the British Empire, and that German Emperors ruled in Prague when England was still a small island-kingdom."

"English people are quite aware of that, but they do not see how it applies to present-day conditions," I replied. "There must be a time limit for historical precedents of that kind. Otherwise Mussolini might one day make it the basis of his policy that even before the German Empire there was a Roman Empire, to which Britain belonged for 500 years."

Till one o'clock in the morning, Herr von Ribbentrop sat on the deserted balcony of the hall of the Kaiserhof putting his point of view with all the conviction and confidence developed by the Nazi regime in the German character. He asked if it were true that he was a very unpopular figure in England. I said that most people regarded him as a political Lucifer—a fallen angel whose knowledge of the English language and British affairs had given him a better chance than most Germans to understand our national point of view, so that he was held to have sinned against the light. He laughed in what seemed genuine amusement.

"I have always wanted and worked for an understanding," he said, "and, as I told you, I am so confident

that all will come out well in the end. Your people are a little slow perhaps to adapt themselves to new ideas, but in the long run their common sense must surely tell them that Germany is only acting as Britain would have acted in her place."

"And meanwhile," I said, "you Germans are doing us a greater service than you know. You are rousing us out of our easy-going complacency. You are wiping out political divisions and producing a thoroughly united nation. You are forcing the easy-going British people to accept discipline, to introduce some kind of national service and organize national production. Thanks to the pressure you are exerting we shall get a share of the tonic effect which is the best thing about the National Socialist regime."

I have quoted the German Foreign Minister's words at some length as representing the mental attitude of the men who control the policy of the German Government. In conversation with them I naturally refute their arguments, and a member of Hitler's personal staff once quoted the Führer to me as saying that he liked to hear me put forward views opposed to his own—perhaps because of the novelty of an attitude which would not be tolerated in a German.

The outlook of the National Socialist leaders on world affairs may be a narrow one, but they hold it with great intensity. That they envy the vast possessions of the British Empire is beyond doubt. Accustomed to the swift, effective action and hitherto strikingly successful results of their totalitarian methods, they despise our dilatory, discursive, disorganized democratic institutions, and deride the cynical way in which big business interests exploit the State for profit. They do not greatly resent the abuse directed against them by some British newspapers, politicians and public speakers because this helps to unite the German nation behind its Government and builds up the idea of encirclement.

Although I must have read hundreds of the violent attacks on Britain produced by Dr. Goebbels and his team

of journalistic echoes, I see no advantage in attempts to reply to them in kind.

Whatever we may think of German aims and methods, the ranting of many British writers about Germany seems to me a futile and un-English form of retaliation. This frothy antagonism is of less value than a cool, objective realization of the situation existing in that country.

No regime could have obtained the hold of the German people that the National Socialist Government possesses if it were directed by such criminal lunatic types as British Left Wing writers are accustomed to depict. In its ruthless suppression of internal political antagonists, and of the German Jewish minority, the Nazis have done much evil, but in the way of social reorganization they have also done much good. There are no beggars in the Reich; no tramps; no slums; no dole-drawers; no "Welsh miners" singing in the streets.

Now that the heavy-handed methods employed within Germany are being extended to international policy there is great danger that they may bring about another European war. If that disaster comes, Britons and Germans will fight even more bitterly than before. Meanwhile, the British people have enough confidence in their cause to be able to consider calmly the outlook and aims of their potential adversary.

The present crisis in Europe is not due to the German Government being made up entirely of fiends, or the British Government of hypocrites. It arises from the fact that, in their historical evolution, these two nations have developed a fundamental divergence of view. The subject of this difference is the German belief that the whole of Eastern Europe is destined to become her Imperial territory.

There are men of great political knowledge in other nations also who seem, however grudgingly, to be approaching this point of view. In the publication *International Affairs* of February, 1939, Dr. Arnold J. Toynbee, Research

Professor of International History of the University of London, wrote:

There is a most urgent need to-day for some kind of world order; and while, of course, to be lasting, a world order must have some moral foundation, it does not seem that any moral bond still holds between the Great Powers in the world of 1938; and so to me it seems likely that the establishment of order in the modern world may be achieved mainly by force.

I think that, in Europe at any rate, it is not impossible that men and women, rather than see Europe wrecked as we thought it was going to be wrecked a month or two ago, may be willing to accept peace—as the Czechs accepted peace last autumn—in the form of a far-reaching subjection to the harsh and brutal dictatorship that now weighs on Germany.

To such an evolution of the international system, Britain and France are opposed by two considerations. One of them, based on the principle that the German appetite grows by eating, is the apprehension that when Germany has brought the whole of Eastern Europe beneath her sway, she may turn, immensely strengthened, to attack the two Western Powers. The other motive is sympathy for the independence of the small peoples which, by the accident of their geographical situation, are threatened with absorption.

The danger of these opposing views lies in the fact that each of the parties sustaining them is sincere. The Germans firmly believe in their mission of reorganizing the relatively backward and undeveloped regions lying between Central Europe and the borders of Asia. They hold that any attempt to obstruct Germany in this great task must be animated by envy, malice and hatred. While they declare their readiness to respect the existing possession of Britain and France, they assert the intention to resist interference with the creation of their future Continental Empire from any quarter.

This national attitude is not of spontaneous origin. It does not represent any deeply-rooted desire of the German people themselves. But the Germans are a docile race with unquestioning faith in their leaders. For six years past their minds have been subjected to persistent propaganda impressing upon them the fundamental righteousness of the national policy. Their sense of unjust treatment in the past predisposes them to believe that any kind of opposition to it on the part of Britain and France must be malevolent.

The immense achievements of the Nazi regime in developing the material resources of the country, and the consistent success which has attended its foreign policy, have inspired confidence in its future invincibility. No ruler has ever done so much for any nation as Hitler has achieved for Germany during the past six years. That there are blots upon the records of the Nazi regime many Germans will admit, but whereas in foreign eyes these blots are its most conspicuous feature, to Germans they are all but hidden by the benefits of Hitler's reorganization of every department of the life of the people.

The sense of national unity—*Volksgemeinschaft*—to which the Führer constantly appeals in his speeches, is not a rhetorical invention, but a reality. Men and women of Germany may have lost their liberty of thought and action, which in any case they never learned to value highly, but Hitler has compensated them for this sacrifice by restoring their national pride and confidence. To them this means more than can be realized by a nation which has never suffered defeat, demoralization and despair.

British minds, accustomed to regard the existing frontiers of independent states as changeable only by some universal upheaval like the Great War, feel instinctive scepticism for the German ambition to construct an Empire of tributary European peoples, but Herr Hitler has been credited with the remark that "it would be easier to become

ruler of all Europe than it was to become ruler of all Germany."

It is not necessarily in terms of conquest that the Nazi Government is thinking. Besides military pressure, great power of economic and political attraction can be exerted by a highly organized nation of 80,000,000 people, whose situation in the heart of the Continent commands the routes in every direction between the Baltic and the Black Sea.

Germany is mainly industrial. Her neighbours to the East and South-East are agricultural countries. Even if the German people were not ruled by a man who dreams dreams and sees visions, the force of gravitation would suffice to bring the smaller States of Eastern Europe into close connection with them.

It has long been obvious that the National Socialist Government intended to make full use of its advantages in this respect. In a book of mine published in the autumn of 1937, under the title *I Know These Dictators* (p. 150), I described the immediate ambitions of Germany as being directed to "the establishment of a hegemony over the small States of Central and Eastern Europe," and added:

In that region, Germany has an equitable interest, and so long as she preserved the integrity of the small States in her orbit, the Western Powers would have no grounds to resent the expansion of her influence there. It is natural for a large planet to possess satellites.

The present acute international tension in Europe is directly due to the simple fact that Germany has not "preserved the integrity of the small States in her orbit." If she had been content to negotiate close economic relations, even including a Customs Union, with Czecho-Slovakia, while leaving the political independence of that country intact, the crisis which began on the morning of March 15, 1939, would not have arisen.

Some of the chief men in Germany had previously assured me that the extension of influence which they con-

templated would take an economic and not a political form. By the establishment of direct control over the Czech provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, Germany broke away from the racial principle invoked by Herr Hitler as justification for his actions against Austria and the Sudetenland.

To this fact, and not to jealousy of the extension of German power over a rich and strategically important country, was due the change of the British attitude from uneasiness to hostility. Neglect of the French precept "*Il y a la manière*" has always been a defect of the diplomacy of the Wilhelmstrasse.

It is part of the German case that the annexation of the Czechs to the Reich was carried out at the request of the Czech Government itself. How far that request was spontaneous and representative of the wishes of the people can be better judged when considering the way in which it came about.

But though the Germans maintain that President Hacha of Czecho-Slovakia officially invited Herr Hitler to take the step he did, they do not lay so much stress upon this point as on the *tu quoque* argument.

The *Diplomatic Correspondence*, an official bulletin issued daily to the Press, and mainly written by Baron von Stumm of the Foreign Ministry, put the German point of view on the day after Mr. Chamberlain's speech at Birmingham in the following words: "An English statesman is the last to be entitled to criticize a world-Power taking control of other nationalities."

From this defensive position Germans passed to the offensive by contending that the agreement between the British Prime Minister and Herr Hitler at Munich in September, 1938, had conceded a free hand to Germany in all Central and Eastern-European affairs.

An official communiqué declared that: "*Chamberlain hatte doch durch seine Unterschrift offenbar die deutschen Interessen in Mitteleuropa foermlich anerkannt.*" (Chamber-

lain, over his own signature, had publicly and formally recognized German interests in Central Europe.)

On this basis the *Diplomatic Correspondence* built up the illogical argument that British protests against the annexation of the Czech provinces resembled an attempt on the part of Germany to interfere in British Imperial affairs. It stated sarcastically that:

With regard to Chamberlain's reproach that the German action was a breach of the Munich Agreement to consult on all questions concerning the two countries, it is not known that, since Munich, England has consulted Germany about the measures she has taken in Palestine or in other parts of the world where she claims to exercise influence.

This communiqué proceeded:

England, throughout her history, has neglected no step to create and secure her Empire. She considers that Empire now as an institution with which other nations have nothing to do. The British should, therefore, avoid assuming an attitude which suggests that they are not ready to concede the same rights to other great peoples.

The answer to these arguments is that no recognition by Britain of the National Socialist Government's right to control the affairs of Central Europe was given at Munich or elsewhere. The German belief to the contrary is an example of that nation's faculty for inventing *post factum* conditions to suit its own interests.

It was in this spirit that Germany annexed Bohemia and Moravia and reduced Slovakia to complete dependency. By thus following up the acquisition of Austria and the Sudetenland, she increased the area of the Reich, within twelve months, by 35 per cent., yet at the same time shortened its frontiers by 300 miles.

"If you want to understand Hitler's policy, you must think of it not as inspired by economic or political, but by strategic, motives," said one of his close associates to me after this event. "Now that the menacing Czech salient

into the heart of the German Reich has been removed, and our South-Eastern frontier rests on the Lower Carpathians, we have no need of further territorial expansion, with the sole exception of the recovery of Danzig."

If that were so, Europe might hope more confidently for peace, but beyond the Lower Carpathians the Protectorate of Slovakia has already been created as a sample of the status which Germany contemplates for other still independent nations in that area of Europe.

It would be wrong to imagine that any German feels conscience-stricken about the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia. The entire nation is convinced that everything its Government has done was justified, ethically as well as politically.

"The Czechs have never been prosperous and happy except under German rule," said Marshal Goering to me. "As a people they are not fitted for self-administration. And now that they are a minority under German protection, we shall set an example to the world by our generous treatment of them."

The Nazi Government contends that it was justified on grounds of national security in removing the Czech salient from the flank of Germany.

It alleges that evidence has been discovered in the archives at Prague of secret attempts made during the winter of 1938 by an influential section of British political opinion to revive the Benes Party in Czecho-Slovakia, and to use that country as a base of intrigue against Germany. This had been a German apprehension since Munich, and there is good reason to believe that some weeks before the annexation actually took place, an ultimatum was sent to the German Legation for presentation to the Czech Government, but was withdrawn by telegram at the last moment before delivery.

It is curious that two nations which, in their individual contacts, get on so well together as the German and British,

should politically be so completely and instinctively irreconcilable. The explanation lies in the national egotism of the average German, which is also the secret of his country's success, for it rivets the entire attention of the people upon whatever aim their Government chooses to pursue.

The German mind is incapable of visualizing—much less of making allowance for—the point of view of foreign states. Anyone who steps off the Berlin pavement into the roadway at the wrong place or where the traffic-lights forbid receives an immediate though dangerous demonstration of this mental characteristic. Motor-cars will drive relentlessly at him without swerving or slackening speed. It does not occur to a German chauffeur that the stray pedestrian in his path may be unfamiliar with the traffic regulations. It is enough for him to know that he has the right-of-way.

Germany now believes that she has the right-of-way in Europe. This attitude may be condemned as intolerant, but it is useless to suppose that a regime which has overcome so many difficulties and faced so many risks will suddenly abandon it for one of gentleness and consideration.

That many individual Germans are cultured, broad-minded and generous-hearted, no one acquainted with that country will deny. The rest of the nation falls into two broad classes. The larger of these consists of a submissive mass, which does what it is told and believes what it is told simply because it is told. For them the highest civic virtue is that sort of obedience which Germans themselves call "*Kadavergehorsam*" (corpse-like compliance).

The other main category of Germans consists of the overbearing, aggressive, inconsiderate type which is the favourite material of the foreign caricaturist, and is responsible for the savageries reported from concentration camps. A dictatorial system, under which personal freedom of thought and action is suppressed, offers unusual scope

to this kind of mentality. In its upper ranks higher qualities are of course required, but in the lower grades of the administrative machine, upon whose close contact with the people the strength of the regime mainly depends, the assertive, self-confident German finds full scope for his activity, and can impose his point of view upon his more malleable fellow-countrymen.

"We have learnt to be hard," said Herr von Ribbentrop to me. "The old pre-war Germany may have had an aggressive exterior, but it was soft at the core. The National-Socialist regime has given a steel backbone to our people. You British are also hard where your own interests are concerned."

The sufferings of the inflation-time in Germany and of that fierce party-warfare preceding the arrival of the Nazis in power were experiences calculated to toughen the fibre of any nation. But the German temperament is not a post-war creation. Its indifference to the claims and interests of others, and ruthlessness in asserting its own, are due to the strong admixture of Slav blood in that Prussian race whose standards and methods have now been imposed on the whole Reich.

The Germany that faces us to-day is not a Western European nation, except in the sense that she is a master of the arts of material civilization developed in that region. Psychologically, Germany belongs to Central and Eastern Europe, an area which missed many of the humanizing influences that the course of history brought to the peoples west of the Rhine.

The element of sternness and insensibility in the German character is shared even by those agreeable Germans with whom, in personal relations, we find it so easy to get on. The brutalities inflicted on Jews—exaggerated and multiplied as these have almost certainly been by foreign report—arouse no strong feelings of compassion in such people. They regard severity as being necessary for the general

good of the community. While we look on its victims as individuals deserving pity, they think of them impersonally as a class of undesirables.

The mood prevailing in Germany to-day is very like that of an English school, where there is no resentment of the fact that the masters occasionally beat the boys. The parallel holds good also in the sense that the Germans, like schoolboys, can have quite a good time, provided (1) they do not resist authority, and (2) are not barred by the rest of the community as outsiders—in the sense of being Jews or Communists.

It is a fallacy to suppose that present-day Germany consists of a cowed people held down by a rigorous regime. Such secret grumbling and jeering as goes on cannot change the fact that, in the main, the German nation stands solidly behind its present leaders, feeling awe-struck and grateful admiration for the triumphs which Herr Hitler has won.

Even the *Witze*, or jokes at the expense of the Government which Germans confidentially retail among themselves, have a basis of respect and, as such, are tolerated.

"A thousand-year-old wish has to-day been fulfilled. Afghanistan has returned to the Reich!" I heard a man exclaim quite openly in the Rio Rita cabaret the night after Bohemia and Moravia had been annexed. There is a parody called "The Führer's Speech of 1942" which, taking off Herr Hitler's oratorical style, may be summarized as follows:—

"Europaer! Europaerinnen!

Es ist kein Zufall dass ich heute von Throne Englands zu Euch spreche. Nachdem Irland ins Reich heimgekehrt ist, sind die schottische Schäfer vom druckendem Joche befreit. Auf dem Treubruch Italiens will ich jetzt nicht weiter eingehen. Ich grüsse unseren heiligen Vater in Rom, Rosenberg den Ersten."

Translated, this reads:

“Men and Women of Europe!

It is no affair of chance that I should to-day be speaking to you from the Throne of England. Following upon the return of Ireland to the Reich the shepherds of Scotland have been freed from an oppressive yoke. I will not now deal with Italy's breach of faith. I greet our Holy Father in Rome, Rosenberg the First.”

CHAPTER II

YEARS OF ILLUSION

LIKE many things in Nature and human experience, international affairs move in waves, with alternations of calm and climax.

Only those whose memory goes back to the early years of this century can recall Britain's last, long, confident and carefree period of peace, which ended with the reign of Edward VII. The Great War was followed by an uneasy interlude of precarious international stability, based on the Allied victory and on general exhaustion, but from 1933, when the Nazi regime came to power in Germany, the graph of international tension rose swiftly.

Preparation for another struggle has become, in every Western European country, the chief form of national activity. It monopolizes the minds of Governments, and forms the continual topic of the Press and of private conversation. In the depths of the countryside cowmen talk foreign politics as they clean out the shippens. Railway-carriages and bar-parlours discuss diplomacy.

Walking along Piccadilly after midnight during one of the crises of this spring, I saw three ladies of the town in violent discussion on the deserted pavement. I assumed it was a professional quarrel about some disputed client, but as I passed, one woman was addressing the others in shrill but earnest tones: "Yes, I know we ought to have five thousand aeroplanes," she said, "but it takes time to build five thousand aeroplanes. . . ."

It is a strange anomaly that while the nations devote

themselves with such energy to plans for mutual destruction, they grow steadily more alike and affiliated. The peoples of Western and Central Europe follow the same habits of life, share similar tastes, listen to each other's wireless programmes and see the same international films. Inter-course between them becomes constantly easier and more frequent. If it were not for differences of language, these nations would resemble each other almost as closely as the States of the North American Union.

The imperialist aims of the Axis Powers are not reflected in the personal attitude of their citizens. One might travel a long time in Germany or Italy without receiving any impression that the people are set upon national expansion. That objective is kept before them by official propaganda rather than by popular instinct. If a free plebiscite in Western Europe could be held on the issue "War or Peace?" the pacific majority would be overwhelming.

This contrast between the inclinations of the individual and the projects of the State is a measure of the extent to which the political organization of Western Europe lags behind its social progress. While the mental outlook of all civilized races has been transformed during the past two generations by scientific discoveries of incalculable influence, mankind remains divided into a mosaic of arbitrary national groups, embodying in their structure the traditions and prejudices of earlier ages.

Though the members of these communities no longer resort to violence in their social relations, it is still retained as an instrument of public policy. Men who in peacetime regard individual security as a primary condition of modern existence are ready to give their lives in war for political interests that contribute little to personal happiness. I have seen many transfers of territory in the past, yet after the first national rejoicing has died down, general well-being in the countries whose frontiers were thus extended has not been perceptibly increased, while the

cost of conquest in the form of bereavement and taxation has remained to be paid.

From the uneasy, jealous and dangerous condition in which most of the inhabitants of Europe now live, as a result of the persistence of old State forms founded on mutual rivalry and conflict, the world is waiting for deliverance. Such salvation seems far away. The new wine of modern civilization is fermenting so fast that it may burst the old political bottles and bring European civilization to ruin.

The future is still hidden—even from the Dictators, whose despotic authority gives them most power to control its course. Both of them have definite national aims which they believe themselves predestined to achieve, but the methods by which they work are determined by enlightened opportunism rather than prearranged programme. The study of their past achievements is the best guide to their future course of action.

Accurate comprehension of what the Dictators have done and what they aim at doing is made difficult by the very abundance of comment and exposition which they arouse in foreign countries. Much of this is based on second-hand knowledge, and a great deal of it is prejudiced.

The annexation of Austria, for instance, was represented by one English writer as an "indescribable witches' sabbath," attended by "unimaginable horrors"; while a French account of that event, depicting it as a brutal military invasion of a cowed and unconsenting country, dramatically asked: "Who in Vienna saw a single individual throw a single flower to the Führer or his troops?"

The truth is that the Anschluss was carried out amid the hysterical enthusiasm of the immense majority of the Austrian people, and that the Führer and his troops were, before my own eyes, literally deluged with flowers.

I was in Austria throughout the first week of the Anschluss, and returned to Vienna three times within the

following six months. I visited the gaols, talking to political prisoners in their cells. I moved about among all sorts of people and never saw any such orgy of brutality as most people in foreign countries have been led to believe followed upon the German annexation.

Several appeals reached me from England to look up people in Vienna whom their friends abroad believed to be in danger. In the cases where I did so, I learnt that nothing had happened to these supposed objects of German persecution. On one occasion I was asked by an English friend to intercede for a young Austrian Monarchist who had been arrested and was said to be a consumptive, whose health would suffer from confinement. I took advantage of an accidental opportunity that arose to do this. The man was medically examined the same day, and shortly afterwards released.

That many individual cases of violence and terrorism occurred I have no doubt. In every country there are cruel and vindictive people, and times of political disturbance enable them to gratify their instincts with impunity. If I had come across such instances I should have recorded them, but reports of atrocities are the least reliable of all hearsay-stories.

We ourselves used to resent the exaggerated accounts of Black-and-Tan activities in Ireland that appeared in the American Press; we are angered by the charges of murder, rape and robbery brought against British troops in Palestine by German newspapers at the present time.

Mutual recrimination between countries on matters of internal administration has no practical effect except to breed international hatred. Barbarity is widespread in modern times. Those newspapers which constantly reproach Germany with it paid no similar attention to the outrages committed in Republican Spain and Soviet Russia.

I can well understand that personal contact with a few cases of brutality may cause a sympathetic observer to generalize from them. But some of the writers most

active in denouncing Germany for inhuman behaviour at the time of the Anschluss used to be just as ardent in their abuse of the French, and in their sympathy with the Germans, during the French occupation of the Ruhr.

A partisan attitude in the affairs of a foreign country makes it easy to believe that the regime which one dislikes is capable of any infamy. If my narrative proves less sensational than other accounts of the same events, it may be because it relates only what I actually saw, and the impression this made upon me at the time, without bias for or against the Nazi Government. German affairs and methods are the concern of Germans. It is well for those who write of such matters to follow the advice given in an article by that distinguished Belgian historian and poet, Professor Emile Cammaerts, of London University, which appeared in the *Contemporary Review*:

We should frankly recognize that the internal policy of a State, however distasteful to another, should not prevent courteous relations. The sixteenth century was an era of religious fanaticism; the twentieth is sorely threatened with a political fanaticism.

The conditions to which this state of affairs is due arise mainly from the character and aims of the two strong personalities dominating the German and Italian nations, and of a few of their closest advisers. It is worth while to study the conduct and bearing of these outstanding figures in the midst of the great events with which they are associated. Their actions and remarks under informal conditions at times of crisis throw light upon their public policy.

In an earlier book—*I Know these Dictators*—I described contacts with Hitler and Mussolini extending from the beginning of their regimes. The pages that follow deal mainly with the German Führer because, during 1938, and the early part of 1939, he was the most prominent individual on the European stage. Throughout that period,

Mussolini, except for his intervention in the Spanish Civil War and his annexation of the small and primitive state of Albania, played a secondary rôle in international politics. This effacement was only tactical. The Italian end of the Rome-Berlin axis may again become active, when it suits the policy of the dominant member of the Axis.

In Italy there was no enthusiasm for the German action against Austria. It had always been considered of strategic importance for the Italian Government to have on its Northern frontier a small independent State which completed the insular character of Italy's position.

The annexation of Czecho-Slovakia still further enhanced Germany's prestige and influence throughout Central Europe, to such an extent that she has since been able to replace Italy as the predominant Great Power in the affairs of Hungary. This brought to an end the efforts which Mussolini had made over a long period of years to establish close relations with that country, resulting in the formation of the group Italy-Austria-Hungary, pledged to economic co-operation by the agreement known as the "Rome Protocols."

It was the displacement of Italy from the position she had thus built up in Central Europe that diverted her aim to the expansion of her influence in the Mediterranean.

Dictators need successes to justify the sacrifices they exact from their citizens. Since the conquest of Abyssinia in 1936, which brought little economic benefit, the Fascist regime has no achievement to its credit, except the unremunerative occupation of Albania, whereas its partner in the Axis has attained, with Italian moral support, two historic national objectives of great economic and military value.

As a first step, a popular demand was stirred up in Italy for concessions in Africa at the expense of France. One of these is concerned with the small port of Djibouti, in French Somaliland, connected by a 485-mile-long rail-

way with Addis Ababa, and the most direct outlet to the sea of the newly-acquired Italian Empire in East Africa.

Djibouti has a population of only 15,000, of whom about 1,500 are Europeans, and, since its economic existence depends on the Italian hinterland, a good case can be made out for the partial or entire transfer to Italy of the port and the railway-line on a basis of compensation for the French interests involved.

Another Italian aspiration, which embodies greater risk of international trouble, is concerned with Tunis. It first found public expression in the shouts with which the Italian Deputies greeted a speech by Count Ciano announcing Italy's intention to pursue "with inflexible resolution the interests and national aims of her people."

Tunis, adjoining Libya, is a French Protectorate, with a population of two and a half millions, of whom 108,000 are French and 98,000 Italians. It was the invasion of Tunis in 1881 which drove Italy to form the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Her resentment of French seizure of this country was natural, since Italian interests and settlers there at that time exceeded those of France, and for twelve years previously Tunis had been under joint Italian, French and British financial control.

A further claim in Northern Africa is for a share in the administrative control of the Suez Canal. In 1937 Italian tonnage using this waterway amounted to 6,000,000 out of a total of 33,000,000. Britain heads the list with 17,000,000 tons, but Italy's position had risen from fifth to second. Italian influence on the Board would be used to secure a reduction of the tolls, which at their present level are a heavy tax on communications with Abyssinia.

To these avowed intentions must be added the secret ambition one day to replace Britain as the controlling Power in Egypt. In March, 1939, twenty thousand labourers were employed in Libya on the construction of roads leading towards the Egyptian frontier. The normal Italian garrison of that province, consisting of two Army Corps, or

about 30,000 men, has been raised to 130,000, with a corresponding increase in the French garrison of Tunis as a result.

Contingents of German troops have been dispatched to the Italian colonies for purposes of "training in desert-warfare." While it is possible that this may be part of Germany's systematic preparation for the administration of the former colonial territories that she hopes to recover, I recall the significant remark of a German Staff officer that the next Great War would probably be fought in Africa, since the widespread development of impregnable systems of fortification in Western Europe is making large-scale military operations in that continent impossible.

The enrolment of Spain in Germany's anti-Comintern team, to which Italy, Japan, and Hungary also belong, suggests that Mediterranean rivalries might be used to create a diversion from German activities in Eastern Europe.

In that event it is likely that Germany would bring her weight to tell in favour of Italy by urging the British Government to obtain from France at least partial agreement to Italian demands, relying, as in the September crisis, on the reluctance of the Western Powers to go to war for any but absolutely vital reasons.

Satisfaction of Italian aims would not greatly alter the existing European balance of power. The ends for which Germany is working are more extensive. Nazi leaders declare them to be a natural development resulting from her geographical position and numerical strength. They deny that the extension of German hegemony in Eastern Europe would challenge the interests of Britain, though it would admittedly reduce France to the level of a second-rate Power.

"We are willing to recognize Britain's position as a World Empire, and even, if necessary, help to defend it," Marshal Goering has told me more than once, "but

you in turn must recognize Germany's dominant position on the mainland of Europe."

The temper of the German people to-day resembles that of the British at the time of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, when even so strong an Imperialist as Rudyard Kipling was moved to write *Recessional* in moderation of his fellow-countrymen's conviction that they possessed a special national mission.

To German and Italian eyes it seems as though the pride and confidence felt by the British in their Empire forty years ago have been replaced by indifference. They observe that emigration to the Dominions has almost ceased, having declined from 285,000 in the year 1913 to an annual average of 24,000 in the last five years—partly, it is true, as a result of restrictions imposed by the Dominion Governments, but due also to the dole, social services and other amenities enjoyed by the poorer classes in Great Britain.

The people of the Dictator-countries believe that the abrogation of the British Government's authority by the Statute of Westminster has weakened the structure of the Empire. They regard the old sturdy spirit of Britain as having degenerated into an uneasy desire to keep her possessions intact without exertion. The Rome newspaper *Tribuna* expressed this opinion in February, 1939, as follows;

The young Englishman does not feel obliged to defend his Empire at the risk of his own life and by means of assiduous training. We must, therefore, infer that the spirit of the rich nations is not in keeping with abnegation and sacrifice.

This decline of national prestige is the penalty that Britain is paying for complacency, ignorance, and lethargy with regard to foreign problems. It has to some extent been repaired by the vigour with which the present British Government has begun to rearm, and by the introduction of a limited measure of conscription.

Until the arrival in power of the Nazi regime, Britain and France had nothing to fear in Europe. Neglected though their defensive precautions were, they possessed financial and industrial resources capable of rapidly supplementing them, whereas Germany had virtually no armaments at all, nor any armaments-industry.

As regards military preparedness, the German position was at scratch, while Britain had a start of several laps of the course. Yet, during the greater part of the six years that have since passed, she remained standing still while Germany forged ahead before her eyes. Grave indictment at the bar of history awaits the men in charge of Britain's fortunes during those lost years.

Unlike the French Ministers, they have not even the excuse that their country was paralysed by internal divisions. At any moment the British nation would have fallen solidly into line behind a Government that told it the truth. As in 1931 it firmly confronted an unprecedented economic crisis, so in 1935 or 1936 it would have faced the necessity of meeting the danger of war.

It was not the means, but the will, that was lacking to British statesmen, and Lord Baldwin's excuse that, if he had frankly revealed the imperative need of rearmament he would have had no chance of being returned to power, was not only cynical but baseless.

In the production of modern war-equipment, and training for its use, five years is a tremendous start. By devoting herself with stern determination to this process—not secretly, but in the eyes of all men—Germany has so completely inverted the situation that, from being the most vulnerable, she has become the most formidable country in Europe. Instead of taking orders, Germans have begun to give them.

Warnings fell in vain on British ears. Viscount Rothermere started a strenuous campaign for the development of a powerful British Air Force. He even set a practical

example by having an aeroplane built to his own specification. Its performance was greatly in excess of anything the Air Ministry possessed, and when he presented the machine to the nation as an example of what the British aircraft-industry, under proper inspiration, could do, it became the prototype of the Blenheim Bomber.

Mr. Winston Churchill, also, persistently denounced the Government's inertia, and pointed to the perils that lay ahead.

These far-sighted views were derided by ignorant writers in a large section of the British Press, and dismissed as baseless and alarmist by Cabinet Ministers who found that an attitude of easy optimism ensured a popular reception for their speeches, which they feared to jeopardize by facing up to the facts.

There are two ways in which superiority in armaments can be used—for fighting or for bargaining. By the sacrifice of butter for guns, and by the renunciation of those pleasures and recreations which many British people consider indispensable, the German nation has secured a position of great potency, whether for the supreme test of war or for the extraction of concessions from countries conscious of the defects of their defences.

During the six months between the Sudeten crisis and the annexation of Prague the British Premier set himself to work for an international understanding which might lead on to an all-round reduction of armaments. The failure of this policy was due to Britain's manifest position of inferiority.

More especially since the great increase of warlike resources brought by the acquisition of the entire stocks of the Czech Army do the Germans deride any suggestion of disarmament. "We gave you the chance when you were strong and we were weak," one of the generals on Hitler's staff said to me after the annexation of the Czech territories. "You would not listen to us then. You

can't expect us to listen to you now that the boot is on the other leg."

There is another difficulty which would hinder the project of beating swords into ploughshares. It is that the conversion of German industrial activities from martial to peaceful purposes would be a difficult economic process. Germany is at present almost entirely cut off from those facilities for obtaining international credit which are essential to world trade.

Such credit would normally take the form of the discounting of German promises to pay by the bankers of London, New York and other financial centres. The system of State economic control prevailing in the Reich makes foreign finance-houses unwilling to advance money on the strength of German bills, for in Germany the interests of the State override all other considerations to such an extent that foreign lenders would be doubtful as to whether, in case of default, they would be able to recover the amount of their claims through German courts in any currency of international value.

The fact that Soviet Russia is able to obtain credit abroad is not a valid parallel, for Russia is so rich in raw materials that she is able to provide adequate collateral security, and to offer such a large margin of profit to those doing business with her that, even when some debts prove bad, they still have an adequate return upon their transactions.

The system of State control which organizes all German industrial activity for war-preparation, whether in the form of the actual manufacture of armaments or in that of making Germany as far as possible independent of outside supplies, is not adapted to international trading on normal lines. To stop the armament industries would thus produce mass-unemployment. It is one of the dangers of the present situation that, as the framework in which she is at present organized becomes efficient, the difficulty of utilizing it for any purpose but making war increases.

Were one of the travellers who have been lost in the Matto Grosso in Brazil, or disappeared in the wastes of the Arctic, suddenly to return to the Europe he left years ago, he would certainly get the impression that war was both inevitable and imminent. Mr. Winston Churchill exaggerated little in saying that a condition of "bloodless warfare" already exists. In this diplomatic "war-game" all the victories have so far been won by the Axis Powers, whose list of successes includes the Reoccupation of the Rhineland, the annexation of Austria, of the Sudetenland, Czecho-Slovakia, Memel and Albania.

In Germany and Italy, a state of semi-mobilization has become almost permanent through the continual calling-up of extra contingents of reservists. The coastal and mainland zones of those countries which are forbidden to foreign ships and aircraft have been constantly extended. There is a large area of Western Germany in which no French or British officer, whether on the active list or the reserve, is allowed to set foot. Corresponding dispositions have been taken by her chief neighbours to the East and to the West. The prospect of imminent war has in fact become so much a part of everyday life that, with human adaptability, most nations have grown to accept it as a normal state of existence. Even so revolutionary a measure as the introduction of conscription in Britain was regarded by the mass of the people as a commonplace occurrence.

Such conditions are deplorable in any country, but in Britain and France they are made more bitter by the knowledge that they might have been averted. The peoples of those countries are paying heavily, not only in the form of thousands of millions spent on armaments, but in stagnant trade and individual anxiety, for neglect to bestir themselves in time.

From the moment that the Nazi Government, with its long-proclaimed Nationalist policy, came to power, the only course of security for Britain was to seek an under-

standing with it, based upon non-interference in German internal affairs.

Actually it was despised and boycotted. No member of the British Royal Family was allowed to pay Germany a visit in the early days when National Socialists would have appreciated that compliment. The suggestion that the Prince of Wales should represent Britain at Marshal Hindenburg's funeral in 1934 was officially rejected.

If the Nazi leaders, instead of being ostracized, had been treated, despite their internal record, with the same formal courtesy as the heads of other great nations, and had been offered redress, by negotiation, of the main German grievances, their genius for organizing and energizing their fellow-countrymen might conceivably have turned into more peaceful courses.

Gratitude is an unknown quality in international relations. Were it not so, the Nazi Government might well recall the fact that, in the days when its position was still precarious, Britain twice vetoed a proposal for its overthrow by force. On both occasions the initiative came from Poland.

In 1933, Marshal Pilsudski suggested to France a joint invasion of Germany. Again, on March 7, 1936, when German troops reoccupied the Rhineland, the Poles urged the French to march against them and promised their support. On both these suggestions, the French Government consulted the British Cabinet, whose advice was against any such action. If Britain ever had plans of "encirclement" for Germany, she would not have missed that opportunity.

As late as 1936, the conquest would have been an easy task for France, even without Polish support. There was then no Siegfried Line defending the German frontier.

During those critical days, Marshal Goering said to me: "If the French advance against us, they will meet with no resistance for the first ten miles; for the next twenty

miles there will be only limited resistance, but after that they will have to fight hard every foot of the way to Berlin." There is no doubt that Germany would have shown herself resolute in facing such a contingency, but it would have been the resolution of despair.

Looking back on the multiple warnings that were given, it appears almost incredible that Britain should have allowed herself to be surpassed in preparedness for war. There is great danger that for her short-sighted persistence in entrusting vital national interests to the protection of the vague and visionary principle of "collective security," the year 1939 may prove to be a Year of Reckoning.

CHAPTER III

TACTICS OF THE *DRANG NACH OSTEN*

I HAVE described what I believe to be the schedule and plan of Germany's efforts to build up a great Empire of tributary States. This undertaking grows more difficult as it becomes more obvious.

So gigantic a transformation of the European situation to the advantage of a single people cannot be carried through without arousing apprehension and opposition among the other European Great Powers, whose international importance and security would be relatively reduced as a result of Germany's success. Their antagonism to German expansion is intensified by the belief that its methods show ruthless disregard for the feelings and national spirit of the small States lying within that region of intended domination which Germany defines as her *Lebensraum*, or "vital area."

These circumstances have led Britain and France to give pledges of armed support to Poland, Greece and Rumania. Such pledges are conditional upon these countries deciding to resist any threat to their independence. In extending her territory, Germany has so far succeeded in avoiding this contingency. Neither Austria nor Czecho-Slovakia made any attempt to oppose their annexation.

In both cases Germany contrived to obtain an official invitation to send her troops into their territory. The Austrian and Czech armies received the German forces with the salutes normally given to the soldiers of a friendly

Power. If Germany continues to have success with this policy of "peaceful penetration," promises of assistance given to Poland, Greece and Rumania will not come into operation.

The issue of peace or war in Europe, so far as Germany's eastward expansion is concerned, at present depends, therefore, upon the readiness of one of these three States, or of some other which may receive a similar guarantee, to take up arms. Poland is the fittest and likeliest of the three guaranteed countries to do so, and, for that reason, it might be supposed that any change of boundaries which Germany may contemplate at her expense will be left to a later stage of the operation, when the German position has been firmly strengthened by success elsewhere.

Greece lies outside the direct path of the extension of German influence, and Rumania has for the present made her peace with the Nazi Government by signing an economic treaty.

It will be Germany's endeavour to pursue the expansion of her hegemony in Eastern Europe by means which will avoid the risk of war.

From the British point of view, the unconditional promise to fight if called upon for the independence of remote Continental States is a great commitment, unprecedented in our political history. To the countries concerned it may not appear to have greatly changed their precarious situation. In the case of Poland and Rumania, it is difficult to see what practical aid Britain could render them except that of the slow and distant pressure of a naval blockade.

The two other nations whose frontiers feel most heavily the menacing proximity of German power are Hungary and Jugoslavia. These are so inaccessible to outside help that the question of offering any guarantee to them has not arisen.

Even with British and French backing, it would require great courage on the part of the small States of South-Eastern Europe to resist German penetration by force. Their position, like that in which Czecho-Slovakia found herself, would be that they might be avenged but could not be rescued.

If, however, one of the countries concerned should determine to defend itself against interference from Berlin or Berchtesgaden with its affairs, and so bring about a declaration of war on Germany by Britain and France, the German strategic plan would almost certainly be to act on the defensive in the West, while consolidating her position, by conquest if necessary, throughout Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

The Germans believe in their ability to hold off British and French attacks. Their Western frontier is protected in the first place by the two neutral buffer-States of Holland and Belgium. Both these countries have declined to enter into a pact with the Western Powers. If Germany were content to respect their neutrality, Britain and France would do the same.

The German frontier against France is defended by the Siegfried Line, a system of forts and tank-traps disposed in depth, which its creators believe to be impregnable. Then comes the frontier of Switzerland, whose people, like the nations of the Low Countries, are determined to maintain their neutrality at all costs.

The German expectation seems to be that if they are content to maintain a defensive front in the West, the British and especially the French will soon tire of running their heads against a stone wall. A very highly-placed German military authority told me that it would cost the French Army 350,000 casualties a week to attack the Siegfried Line on any scale offering hope of success.

With submarines and aircraft defending the Heligoland

Bight against any approach to the German North Sea coast, the only means of offensive action available to the Anglo-French alliance would thus be aerial bombardment. In this kind of warfare Germany holds great superiority. When a foreign Ambassador asked Marshal Goering after the Munich crisis whether it was true that Germany had 8,000 first-line machines, he replied that the figure was exaggerated, but that she certainly had more than Britain, France, Belgium and Czecho-Slovakia together. Since that time aircraft construction has been intensified in all these countries, but the proportion probably still holds good, especially in view of the fact that the 1,582 Czech aeroplanes have now been transferred to the other side of the account.

Were it to happen that no country begins a war by offering armed resistance to German expansion, it is conceivable that the whole of South-Eastern Europe may come under her control. Germany's position would then be a very strong one. If to the mineral resources and munition-factories of Czecho-Slovakia were added the corn-supplies of Hungary, the bacon and dairy produce of Jugoslavia, and the oil and wheat of Rumania, she would no longer have reason to fear the blockade which is the most effective weapon that could at present be used against her.

The remoter part of the German programme, which contemplates detachment of the Ukrainians from Russia and Poland, to be followed by their conversion into a semi-independent republic under German tutelage, might indeed bring about a conflict with the Soviet Government. In Hitler's view, Stalin's personal position is too precarious for him to risk a war. He warned Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, that it would be unwise to count on Russian support.

The Germans believe that the Soviet Dictator depends entirely upon his police, and that a Russian mobilization would lead to his being overthrown by generals who would thus avenge the execution of Marshal Tukachewsky.

The Führer, I am told, gave close consideration to the military potentialities of Russia at the time of the Sudeten crisis. He regards the conclusion to which he then came—that she could be counted out as a European factor—as having been fully justified by the Soviet Government's inactivity during the great international developments that have since occurred.

With these considerations in their minds, the Germans are unlikely to declare war on Britain or France. If a conflict comes, it will probably arise from the resistance of some State guaranteed by those two countries, or else from a clash between the Western Powers and Italy in the Mediterranean, which might bring in Germany, together with the other States of the anti-Comintern pact, to support their ally.

From the Nazi point of view, it would be desirable that the declaration of war should come from the democratic Governments, for that could be represented to the German people as confirmation of the theory of encirclement which the Propaganda Ministry has so industriously spread.

It is unfortunate that the first action of the British Government after the seizure of Prague should have been to make an unsuccessful overture to the Bolshevist regime, for this supplied the Propaganda Ministry with valuable material for working on the apprehensions of the German nation, which remembers vividly and bitterly the suffering entailed upon it by encirclement in the last war. It also tended to alienate Spain.

The efforts of Britain and France in any future campaign between Germany and the Western Powers would be directed to wearing down the human and material resources of the German people. It is evident that such a struggle, fought to a finish with modern instruments of destruction, would wreck the civilization of Western and Central Europe. Communist risings might well produce internal anarchy in all the countries engaged. When the war was over,

America, Japan, and possibly Russia would be left to divide international predominance over a crippled and impoverished world.

Realization of these grim possibilities inspires the caution and patience that characterize the policy of the British and French Governments. As a French expert on international affairs aptly expressed it to me: "The Germans are not afraid to risk losing a war. The British and French are afraid to risk winning a war."

The readiness with which the German Government incurs this risk would seem to discredit the belief of some foreign observers that its supplies of essential war materials, especially petrol, are so limited that it could not face a long campaign. Marshal Goering has assured me that Germany is now manufacturing petrol from "brown coal" on such a scale that he is building two distillation plants, to utilize the deposits of that material in Austria, which will produce petrol for export.

With the 9,000,000 ton output of the Rumanian oilfields already in reach of her grasp, it would certainly be optimistic to suppose that Germany's war-machine would collapse for lack of fuel.

That there is a shortage of certain alloys which could be obtained only from America is likely. The decline in the quality of the rolling-stock of the Reich railways is an indication of this. Some years ago, German engineers designed a new type of engine called the "unit locomotive," which was a triumph of technical ingenuity. Its efficiency depended, however, on the high quality of the materials put into it, and the reduction of the number of these machines in service suggests either an absolute shortage of high-grade steel or else the allotment of all available supplies to military purposes.

Reports from Spain are to the effect that German aeroplanes, lorries and even artillery are liable to frequent breakdowns, which would indicate lack of the best materials.

The true facts of this position are known only to the Nazi leaders themselves, and do not seem to affect their confidence.

"There was a time when it needed courage to pursue Germany's policy," said Marshal Goering to me three days after the annexation of Prague. "It needed courage to resign from the League of Nations, and to introduce compulsory national service. The reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936 required great courage, but since then our resources have developed so enormously that we can now afford to snap our fingers at any opposition."

Some people in foreign countries argue that Germany will continue to appear formidable only so long as her succession of triumphs remains unresisted and uninterrupted. They think that a breakdown would occur if the German nation were one day to find itself confronted by adversaries of such vast resources and undoubted determination as Britain and France. It is unwise to count on any such internal collapse, for when war broke out, every single German—even though he had doubted the wisdom of his Government's policy in the past—would be aware that the whole national existence was at stake.

The effect of continuous and concentrated propaganda during the past six years, by every known means of influencing the human mind, has been to convince the vast majority of the German people that their country is surrounded by jealous and secretly hostile neighbours. Most Germans would take up arms in the belief that they were fighting in legitimate self-defence and for a just cause.

Nor can one see what section of the German people would, or could, oppose the action of its Government. The Generals, at the time of the occupation of the Rhineland; again before the march into Austria, and, finally,

in the Sudeten crisis of September, 1938, advised against incurring the risk of war. They were sternly overruled. The careers of those who tried to deflect the Führer from his purpose were broken.

Moreover, on each occasion, the misgivings that they expressed proved unfounded, for Hitler achieved his aims without meeting with foreign resistance. The new men who have succeeded to the highest positions in the armed forces would hardly dare to venture objections against the policy of a leader whose prestige has thus been exalted by success. If one day the sequence of bloodless triumphs ends in war, it will then be too late for any soldier to do anything but fight.

Would the Nazi organization itself stand the strain of war? Like all human institutions, it is full of jealousies and rivalries, but these are counteracted by the instinctive German sense of discipline and by a sense of personal devotion to the Führer.

The only potential human weakness that can be detected in this intensely organized nation lies in the fact that its nerves are already highly strung. For years the younger generation of Germans has been disciplined and ordered about by Party officials. Storm Troopers and S.S. Guards have little leisure of their own, being constantly called out to parades or marches, or to line the streets in honour of the visit of some Party magnate.

The German workman is always liable to be sent away from his home to some other part of the country where his labour is required by the armament industries or the Four Year Plan. Those who object forfeit their *Arbeiterbuch*, or workman's card, so that they can get no other employment, and may end in a concentration camp. Wages are low, hours are long, and though the people are not undernourished, shortage or poor quality is sometimes noticeable in certain kinds of food.

Individual complaints of lack of personal liberty and

privacy are not infrequent. The *Schwarzer Korps*, the organ of the younger generation of Nazis, publishes articles pointing out that only petty-minded Liberals aspire to such a thing as private life, and Dr. Goebbels tried to counteract the same grievance by asserting in his weekly article in the *Völkischer Beobachter* that "the manly character of these times appears to us more valuable and important than their temporary and superficial difficulties, which are associated with all great periods of history."

Army officers declare that many recruits have been spoiled and given too high a sense of their personal importance by their service in the Hitler Youth and the Labour Corps. The Army, however, has now been brought under complete Party control. The days are over when drill-sergeants made a practice of imposing extra fatigues on soldiers who had achieved rank in the Party formations, and officers held up the German Army to their men as an institution of older date and finer traditions than the National Socialist regime. To-day, Party agents regularly lecture the troops on Nazi ideals, and the function of officers is limited to technical instruction.

The older people are influenced by other considerations. National Socialist persecution of the Church and of the Jews, especially the violent anti-Semitic outburst which followed the murder of vom Rath in the Paris Embassy, secretly shocked many of them, but it is not upon that generation of Germans that the Nazi regime would rely in war-time.

By sacrificing to the State their personal freedom of thought and action, the German people have immensely increased their national efficiency. Their country now represents a scientific co-ordination of human labour, skill and resources under concentrated control such as the world has never seen. In the early stages of a war, this closely-knit nation would operate like a machine, especially if, as is likely, the campaign began with dramatic German successes.

Though I have known Germany since boyhood, the real character of her people has always been a mystery to me. Its capacity for apparent change is baffling. I can recall four different phases of modern Germany without being able to decide in which of them the real temperament of the nation was manifest.

There was the pre-war period of sharply defined social distinctions, when such differences of character existed between the various Kingdoms and Provinces making up the Empire that, but for their common language, one could have hardly believed them to belong to the same country.

Then there was the period following immediately upon the war, when a brutal Communist class seemed the predominant element in Germany; every large city had its local Soviet; and there were parts of Berlin where a respectably dressed citizen would have been foolhardy to venture.

Close upon this stage of class-hatred and almost constant civil conflict followed a vicious interlude in which all kinds of immorality were not only practised in every large German city, but seemed to be generally condoned.

And now appears a disciplined, standardized, nationalist Germany in which no trace is to be found either of the old class-barriers, of the savagely aggressive proletariat or of the cynical licentiousness of those earlier eras.

At the end of the Great War, Germany lost 25,000 square miles of her territory, containing 6,000,000 people, with practically the whole of her mercantile marine. Her Army and Navy were reduced to insignificant proportions. Her industrial and commercial systems fell into complete disorganization and heavy financial liabilities were imposed upon her.

The methods by which, within so short a time, she has transformed herself from impotence to might are well

summed up from an impartial standpoint in the Brazilian newspaper, *Batalha*, which, in March, 1939, wrote:

In 1918 Germany was a conquered and suppressed country. Twenty years later, she is the Power before which all others hold their breath.

So long as Germany, in the grip of Liberalism, clung to her Parliamentary institutions and the intrigues of parties, she could only lose a war and win nothing by peace. But, from the day that she did away with the party-demagogy and her Parliamentarianism, Germany was raised to her present position of power and prestige.

Her whole recovery is solely the work of a strong Government, an iron discipline and a concentration of authority; of the destruction of all disruptive forces in the nation and of a spirit of unyielding nationalism. That is the secret of the new Germany.

There is in this a lesson which the British people would do well to meditate. Pride in ancient institutions should not blind us to defects which onlookers perceive clearly though we may conceal them from ourselves. The opinion of such spectators was summed up by a Polish newspaper, the *Gazeta Polska*, in the words:

The organization of democratic and Parliamentary States no longer corresponds to the requirements of the period in which we live.

German confidence is largely based upon the belief that British democratic institutions automatically deprive this country of strong and vigorous leadership. Nazi Germany finds contemptuous amusement in such matters as the continuance in our midst of close upon 2,000,000 unemployed and the interminable delays in rebuilding the Waterloo Bridge in London, which it compares with the enormous public works that it has carried out even while arming on a gigantic scale. Failure to deal with the slum problem and with the confusion of authority that obstructs town-planning and road-building helps to inspire the

German estimate of the modern British character as slovenly, slipshod and slothful.

Germans expect to see our Empire ultimately go the way of Spain's, and for the same reason. They regard the British people as having lost their pioneering spirit, and degenerated into a race whose only ambition is to live comfortably and, if possible, upon the labour of others.

"A nation which cannot colonize and develop its Empire does not deserve to have one," is their view. Emerson said that "the end of the human race will probably be that it will eventually die of civilization." The Germans hold that this is proving true of Democracy.

In these weaknesses of our national system, British Ministers seem to Germans to take a perverted pride. When Herr von Ribbentrop first came to London as Ambassador-at-Large, I was present at a dinner-party where a member of the Cabinet was among the guests. Herr von Ribbentrop asked why it was that the British Government had not adopted a more definite line about some matter of international policy which was pending at the time, and I remember the expression of ironic amusement on his face while he listened to the reply.

"You must remember," said the Cabinet Minister after a portentous pause, "that we members of a democratic Government serve a many-headed master. We must always keep our ears to the ground. The reason why it has not been possible for us to make up our minds in this matter is because there has been no time yet for any of us to go down into the country and find out what the constituencies are thinking."

Strong though Germany appears to be, it is sometimes argued that her international position may one day be weakened by the defection of Italy from the Rome-Berlin Axis. In a European struggle between Democracy and Totalitarianism even the neutrality of Italy would alter

the situation greatly to the advantage of the Western Powers. It would free France from the necessity of guarding one of the three frontiers upon which she at present expects to be threatened, and it would release the British and French Navies from their preoccupations in the Mediterranean.

The transference of Italy to the side of the Democracies would seriously weaken the German position by exposing her new southern frontier to attack.

Yet however unwillingly Italy may have entered into alliance with Germany, it is unlikely that she would, or could, now break away from it. A German invasion of her territory, on the pretext of bringing support, might be one of the first developments of a European war. The British Government's policy of Sanctions forced Mussolini to accept the position of junior partner to a formidable and aggressive nation, and to seek his reward in the form of German support for the realization of those Italian ambitions which Britain and France had refused to gratify.

This reward has hitherto been scanty, the first instalment of it being the annexation of Albania, upon which Italy would hardly have ventured without German backing. The Italian Government may hope before long to gain possession of the Dalmatian coastline at the expense of Yugoslavia, though this acquisition might be set off by the establishment of a German Protectorate over Croatia, which would give the naval and aerial forces of Germany a base on the Adriatic. The prospect has been held out to Mussolini by Germany of ultimately obtaining rich overseas territory in the Crimea and the Caucasus, but the fulfilment of this depends upon the still remote operation of detaching the Ukraine from Soviet Russia.

In the event of the Axis ever being able to dictate terms to the Western Powers, whether after a war arising incidentally from Germany's ambitions in Eastern Europe, or

ultimately when their fulfilment has placed her in a position to demand the surrender of overseas possessions by the British and French Empires, Italy would expect to be rewarded by the establishment of her authority in Egypt and Tunis, if not along the whole of the Northern shore of the African continent.

Strongly as such ambitions may appeal to Mussolini, he is not supported by the same ardent and highly-organized national spirit that exists in Germany. His personal position is made relatively weaker than that of Hitler by reason of the fact that, whereas in Germany no alternative Government is feasible owing to the dissolution or subordination of all earlier State institutions, in Italy the Monarchy and the Army still embody the traditions of the pre-Fascist regime, and might, under certain circumstances, resume control of the country's administration.

A new factor in the strategic situation was the transfer in April, 1939, of the major part of the United States Navy to the Pacific. While the American Government has avoided any commitments to give armed support to the cause of the democratic Powers, the sympathies of almost the entire nation would clearly be with any States which found themselves forced to resist totalitarian aggression.

The concentration of the main strength of the American Fleet in the Pacific can only mean that the United States are prepared, in the event of war, to neutralize the action of Japan, upon whom, as a member of the Anti-Comintern Pact, Germany and Italy might call to create a Far-Eastern diversion in their favour.

Committed to a now inactive state of war with China, and exposed to the possibility of aerial attacks against Manchukuo or even on the Japanese islands themselves by the Russian forces in Eastern Siberia, Japan might well be reluctant to engage in war on the world scale. The presence of the American Navy at its bases in the Hawaiian

and Philippine Islands would provide an excellent excuse for her to remain neutral.

By encouraging this attitude on her part, the United States would do great service to the cause of the Western Powers, whose navies would then be able to concentrate on Atlantic and Mediterranean waters and on counter-acting the submarine threat in the narrow seas around the British Isles.

CHAPTER IV

EASTERN EUROPEAN REACTIONS

SINCE March 15, 1939, the aim of German policy has become clear to the rest of the world. It is to establish German control throughout the whole of Eastern Europe, including Southern Russia. The countries which stand next in Germany's path towards the fulfilment of this plan are Poland and Hungary. Which of these will be the first to feel the weight of German pressure?

Their attitudes in the critical period following immediately upon the annexation of Czecho-Slovakia were different. Poland was defiant; Hungary was compliant.

Poland's position was complicated by the fact that within her present frontiers lie areas coveted by Germany. The first of these objectives is the territory of the Free City of Danzig, inhabited by 400,000 Germans. The other consists of the Polish Corridor, where live three-quarters of a million more.

This territory was detached from Germany at the Peace Conference in order to give Poland an outlet to the sea. Even including the Danzig coastline, the Polish seaboard is still only 87 miles long, against Continental frontiers of 3,125 miles. The vital importance to Poland of this access to the Baltic was well defined by no less a German than Frederick the Great, who wrote that: "Whoever possesses the mouth of the Vistula and the City of Danzig will be more master of Poland than the King who rules there."

Danzig forms the Western extremity of the province of East Prussia which was cut off from the rest of Germany by the Polish Corridor. Germany is set upon re-attaching Danzig to her East Prussian territory. The Danzigers themselves, 90 per cent. of them German, demand this restoration also. They do so notwithstanding the fact that the abandonment of their special position might ruin them economically unless the Polish Corridor simultaneously returned to Germany. For Danzig's trade has quadrupled since it became one of the two seaports through which Polish traffic passes, the other being Gdynia, a new artificial harbour built on the sand-dunes that form the coast of the Corridor.

European acquiescence in Germany's annexations of Austria, the Sudetenland and Memel, on the grounds of racial kinship and the desire of the inhabitants of those areas, makes it difficult to find a basis for resisting the application of the same process to Danzig. The administration of the Free City by the League of Nations has become purely nominal, the inhabitants having set up a Nazi regime of their own. The Poles, however, strongly resist any suggestion that they should surrender their privileges in that port, which stands at the mouth of their only navigable river, the Vistula.

Even before the seizure of Bohemia and Moravia, the German Ambassador in Warsaw was trying to negotiate with the Polish Government on this subject without any visible prospect of success. His overtures included another proposition which Poland resisted even more strongly. This was for the prolongation to Danzig of the Reich motor-road that now stops at the frontier of the Corridor. The demand is for this road to be not only German-built but German-controlled, with exemption from Polish Customs duties and territorial authority. Alongside the road, through the three-mile-wide strip of territory demanded, a railway would also be built from Germany to East Prussia.

The Nazi Government is not at present asking for the Polish Corridor itself. Herr Hitler told me in March, 1938, that, though it was a matter for regret that this should consist of territory largely inhabited by Germans, he recognized the need for a country like Poland with over 30,000,000 inhabitants to have access to the sea, and that he had confirmed its existence by signing the German-Polish Pact of Non-Aggression in 1934, which however he repudiated on April 28, 1939.

The Poles, however, believe that a highway across the Corridor—their Province of Pomorze—would be a step towards the annexation of this territory.

For the first time, therefore, in the course of Germany's Eastward expansion, that country has come up against a nation prepared to resist.

The Germans themselves recognize this.

"The Poles are not like the Czechs," they say. "The Czechs were always a *Dienervolk*. They are excellent as grooms, valets, tailors, shoemakers, and in similar subordinate capacities, but they were never rulers. The Poles, on the other hand, are a *Herrenvolk*. Not only were they great fighters in the days of their freedom, but even after the partition of their country they carried on two hopeless revolutionary wars against Russia, in 1831 and 1863."

The occupation of Memel by Germany on March 23, 1939; gave a sudden urgency to the problems of Danzig and the Polish Corridor. I was in Warsaw immediately afterwards. The spirit displayed by all sections of the people was extremely high. Whereas in other countries the prospect of fighting is regarded with gloomy foreboding, the Poles seemed to treat it almost gaily. If war came, they said, they would at once invade and occupy East Prussia, whose garrison is two Army Corps.

A gradual mobilization was going on, which, by the end of March, had assembled about 1,400,000 Polish troops

along the frontier. The potential military strength of the country is four and a half million men, including 40,000 cavalry and 4,500 guns.

In war-material, Poland is, of course, less well-equipped than Germany, but the Poles were confident that her potential adversary's superiority in mechanized troops and heavy guns would be largely negated by the difficulties of the Polish *terrain*.

"The roads, snow-bound in winter, muddy in spring, and with a surface of loose soil in summer, would be impassable to heavy transport," they said. "Our own supplies would be maintained by countless light farm-carts, which can go anywhere. The forests would give cover to our cavalry, which could emerge from them for swift attacks on the advancing enemy. We should have to retreat, of course, but we should kill a lot of Germans, and if our whole country was overrun, what would Germany gain by that? Only a common frontier with Russia, which would bring her up against a fresh and powerful enemy."

Even if they had to fight alone, declared the Poles, they would do so rather than give up the Corridor or agree to the amalgamation of Danzig with the Reich. When asked why they were so determined to maintain the artificial separation of Danzig from East Prussia, they would reply: "It is not a question of the local rights or wrongs of the Danzig situation. We are confronted by a great German flood setting Eastwards in Europe. We are determined to build a dam against it. To make an exception for Danzig would be to leave a gap in the dam, which would eventually cause its collapse."

Despite this die-hard attitude, the Poles expressed reluctance to join forces with Soviet Russia, even if she were willing, for common defence against possible German aggression. They have no high opinion of the military resources of the Bolshevik regime.

The Polish view is that Russia could possibly produce two or three thousand efficient aeroplanes and pilots, and

perhaps two million well-trained and properly equipped troops. The Poles would like to have these in the form of an expeditionary force to be brigaded with their own troops, but they do not relish the idea of the invasion of their country by vast Russian armies for the purpose of making it a battle-ground with Germany—mainly, it would appear, because they fear that such an occupation might prove permanent.

Poland is not, however, the most direct or even the most desirable route for Germany's advance in Eastern Europe. It is preferable to retain her as a buffer-State against Soviet Russia, for a common frontier with the Bolsheviks would necessitate much stronger garrisons in Eastern Germany.

The other and easier avenue to Eastern Europe lies across Hungary.

Relations between Germany and Hungary are curiously complicated. The Hungarian Government incurred Herr Hitler's displeasure by refusing in the summer of 1938 to co-operate with German plans for the recovery of the Sudetenland. When it became clear that these would not be opposed with force by the Western Powers, Hungary, obeying her own interest, came quickly into line with Germany. Under circumstances explained later in this book, she was not able to carry out the occupation of the whole of Ruthenia until after the German entry into Prague six months later. With the support of Berlin, however, she recovered the tract of territory mainly inhabited by Hungarians which had been attached to Slovakia by the Peace Treaty of Trianon.

At the last minute the Germans partially went back on this arrangement, and it was Italy who earned Hungary's gratitude by standing up for her claims. The Czecho-Slovak and Hungarian Governments had agreed to accept the arbitration of Germany and Italy as to the future frontier between them. A preliminary conference was held

in Rome between Count Ciano and Herr von Ribbentrop, at which they settled the future boundary of Hungary and Slovakia. The following week the German and Italian Foreign Ministers met again in Vienna for the formal confirmation of their decision.

Herr von Ribbentrop now raised objections to the inclusion in Hungary of the three towns of Kassa, Ungvar and Munkács, which formed three separate promontories into the Slovak border as it was then planned. The German Minister said that the Slovak Premier had in the meantime convinced him that these towns should remain in Slovakia. To this Count Ciano replied that he had submitted the line of the new frontier, as agreed between himself and Herr von Ribbentrop in Rome, to the Duce, who had approved of it. He could not now ask the Duce to accept some other line.

There was a strong difference of opinion about this, but Count Ciano maintained his position so stoutly that the Hungarian claims to the three towns was allowed. This had the effect of making Germany for the time being unpopular both in Slovakia, where Herr von Ribbentrop was held to have deserted the Slovak cause, and in Hungary, where his attempt to deprive that country of three cities of entirely Magyar population was strongly resented.

The Hungarians were also aggrieved by Germany's insistence on the allotment to Slovakia of the important town of Bratislava on the Danube. Under its name of Pozsony, this city, where several Hungarian kings were crowned in bygone days, had been predominantly Magyar in population until the Czecho-Slovak Government, which occupied Pozsony at the end of the Great War and managed to get its claim confirmed by the Peace Conference, had imported Slovaks into the city.

Watching the celebrations in Budapest of the recovery of Hungarian territory, I noticed that references to Germany in the speeches were coldly received, whereas the name of Italy aroused enthusiastic cheers.

There were violent frontier skirmishes during the winter between the Hungarian and the Czecho-Slovak troops and police garrisoning Ruthenia, the Easternmost province of that country.

The German veto on the Hungarian desire to establish a common frontier with Poland held good, however, and the general view in Europe was that Germany had decided to maintain the independent existence of Ruthenia as a "corridor" of future access to Rumania. The province certainly was ill-fitted to fulfil that function, as the parallel ranges of mountains that cross it from North to South had prevented the building of any railway-line running from West to East between Central Europe and Rumania, with the exception of one which passed mainly through the territory which Hungary had just acquired from Slovakia.

Hitler himself derided this idea. "What do they think I want a corridor for? To run up and down it?" he exclaimed to one of his intimates.

This whole situation was altered in March, 1939, by the German swoop on Bohemia and Moravia and the simultaneous establishment of a protectorate over Slovakia. The disappearance of the Czecho-Slovak Republic from the map left Ruthenia with its mixed three million population of Slovaks, Ukrainians, Hungarians and Rumanians as an isolated and masterless fragment of territory, like a satellite whose parent-planet has disappeared.

The temptation was too great for the Hungarians to resist. They marched their troops into Ruthenia and did not stop until they had made their long-desired common frontier with Poland. Germany, busy with the reaction aroused in Europe by her seizure of Prague, and pre-occupied with her negotiations with Poland about Danzig and the Corridor, this time allowed the Hungarians to have their way.

The Hungarian Government exploited its opportunity with vigour, and on the very day before the new semi-

independent Republic of Slovakia put herself under Germany's military protection, the Hungarians annexed a ten-mile-wide strip of land from North to South inside the Eastern border of that country, their purpose being to secure the undisturbed possession of the railway-line running from the Hungarian frontier-town of Ungvar, across what had hitherto been Slovak territory, into Poland.

So oddly complicated were Central European affairs at the end of March, 1939, that the Germans gave military aid to the Slovaks, and the Italians did the same for the Hungarians. German A.A. batteries and Messerschmidt fighting 'planes shot down Italian Capronis. It is even related that, following on this "battle-practice," the German General Staff sent a memorandum to the Italian Air Ministry suggesting improvements in their machines.

Officially Germany was tolerant of Hungary's energetic action and contented herself with recommending that the Slovaks and Hungarians should hold a conference to settle the line of their new frontier.

As matters stood in April it looked as if Hungary had handled her interests well. In the French phrase, she had "flown to the help of the conqueror," and had secured an ample reward in the form of the province of Ruthenia and a long belt of territory, 400 square miles in extent, with a population of 70,000, which had previously belonged to Slovakia. The new Hungarian Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, Count Teleki and Count Csaky, emphatically and ostentatiously recognized Germany as the dominant power in Central Europe, and hastened to seal their fidelity to her by joining the Italian-German-Japanese Alliance known as the Anti-Comintern Pact.

But these gestures and declarations of devotion to the German cause, unfortunately for Hungary, are powerless to alter the fact that that country lies right across Germany's line of advance towards Eastern Europe. On the North of her the Carpathian and High Tatra mountains form a barrier for any movement from West to East, whereas

Hungary consists mainly of a vast plain, ideal for the prolongation of the German motor-road system through Vienna towards the East. Across Hungarian territory flows the great stream of the Danube, the water-highway from Germany to the Black Sea, capable even in summer of carrying ships with a draught of fifteen feet right up to the German frontier. Over that country, too, the Germans aim at building a pipe-line to bring oil from the Rumanian wells.

Hungary is a nation with a strongly internationalist spirit, and Germany does not intend to tolerate any genuinely independent State in that Eastern European area which she has marked out for her own. The Hungarian Government has done the best it could for itself by conforming as fully as possible to Germany's wishes. Dr. Imrédy, who was Prime Minister at the time of the Munich crisis, put these intentions plainly to me on December 12, 1938, in Budapest: "Hungary will adapt herself to German policy because she cannot do otherwise."

This practice has been continued by his successor. The present Foreign Minister, Count Csaky, immediately after his appointment, went to Berlin to find out how he could best keep on good terms with the Wilhelmstrasse. Yet the Hungarian people may not be prepared to go so far down the path of subordination as Germany's conception of their future standing in Central Europe will require.

Hungary is under a Regent who represents the Holy Crown of St. Stephen, in which the Hungarians regard the authority of the State as almost mystically embodied.

This type of constitution is thoroughly antipathetic to National Socialist ideas. Herr Hitler considers monarchical institutions—even when they are in commission, as is the case in Hungary—to be incompatible with National Socialist principles of leadership. During his visit to Rome in May, 1938, he expressed indignation at the purely formal precedence which the Crown of Italy still retains over the

Duce as Head of the Government. The big estates and patriarchal traditions of Hungary's national life appear to him reactionary and out of date.

Moreover, the Hungarian Government has got itself into Germany's bad books by the semi-independent line of policy that it pursued in seizing Ruthenia and a strip of Slovakia. The Germans allege that these annexations were carried out with great ruthlessness. These reproaches may seem to come with a bad grace from such a quarter, but schoolmasters with a fondness for the cane have been known to beat little boys for fighting.

Not having been present when the Hungarian Army occupied Ruthenia, I have no personal knowledge of what occurred, but the Germans declared that there were many executions, and a news-agency in Berlin called the Ukrainian Press Service was allowed to circulate circumstantial accounts of massacres, whose victims were alleged to include prominent Ukrainian inhabitants of Ruthenia working at that time in co-operation with Berlin. Among them is said to have been M. Julius Revay, who, a fortnight before his execution—if this actually took place—came to Berlin for a conference with Herr von Ribbentrop, and was looked on by the German Government as a possible future President for an independent Ukrainian Republic under German suzerainty.

The Slovak Government and the Ukrainian Nationalists of Ruthenia alike applied to Berlin for protection against the heavy-handed methods to which they profess to have been subjected by the Hungarian Army and police. They are said to have been told that they must be patient; that their grievances will be redressed in due course; but that they must wait until it is convenient for Germany to take action.

Stepping back, therefore, for a general view of the Central European situation, one sees this picture:—

Germany is determined to extend her authority over the whole of Eastern Europe. There are two possible

lines of approach to this goal. One lies through Poland; the other through Hungary.

The advance through Poland would be difficult. The Poles are a high-spirited and well-armed nation who would resist. Their independence is furthermore guaranteed by Britain and France. Even if their country could be defeated and occupied, the result would be that Germany would find herself in the undesirable position of having a common frontier with Soviet Russia.

The advance through Hungary, on the other hand, would be easy and more advantageous, in that it leads directly towards the Northern shore of the Black Sea.

After the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, Germany was prepared to use Hungary as a means of exercising pressure on Rumania. The Hungarian Government gladly co-operated, since the recovery of the lost province of Transylvania is one of its national aims. The Army was mobilized on the Rumanian frontier, with German divisions moving eastward through Bohemia to support it, but Rumania came to terms with Germany.

Within a week she had signed an economic treaty, providing not only for a large increase in her exports of oil and wheat to that country, but also for extensive and undefined German co-operation in the development of her petroleum wells, mineral deposits and industries. Hungary's ardent desire for the return of the province of Transylvania, taken from her by Rumania after the war, is still unsatisfied. It remains to be seen which of these countries Germany will use against the other.

In authoritative German circles the fate contemplated for Hungary is partition into a number of German protectorates based on her pre-war frontiers. The boundaries of these would be determined by race. There would be a Magyar Protectorate, a Carpatho-Ukrainian Protectorate, consisting of what used to be Ruthenia; a Slovak Protectorate, and a Croatian Protectorate. The 700,000

Germans in Hungary, mainly in the area lying West of the Danube, would become full citizens of the Reich.

This scheme would involve the detachment from Yugoslavia of her discontented minority of 5,000,000 Croats, who are in the extreme west of the country, with Zagreb and Ljubljana as their principal towns. The annexation of this territory to her future Empire of dependent States would give Germany access to the Adriatic, at the head of the Gulf of Quarnero. For her consent to such unwelcome extension of German influence to the Mediterranean seaboard, Italy would be compensated by the allotment to her of the Dalmatian coast.

Italy's occupation of Albania on Good Friday, 1939, was a first step towards the realization of this plan. There is significance in the fact that, though the Italian Government professed readiness to give assurances that it had no ulterior intentions against Greece, no similar declaration was made about Yugoslavia.

As the next item but one in the German programme of Eastward expansion, that country may prove harder than Hungary to embody in the German tributary area. The Serbs are great warriors. Mussolini once described their infantry to me as the best in the world. But Yugoslavia is a country divided against itself. The Croats, distinct in culture and religion from their kinsmen of Old Serbia, have always been, under their tenacious leader, Dr. Matchek, the "Irish problem" of Belgrade.

In 1940 the young King reaches his majority, and the functions of the present Regent, Prince Paul, will come to an end. Germany believed that she had secured a firm foothold in Yugoslavia by gaining the collaboration of the former Prime Minister, M. Stoyadinovitch, who from small beginnings became one of the richest men in the Balkans. In circumstances somewhat obscure, M. Stoyadinovitch resigned his office and was succeeded by M. Stetkovitch. The new Premier set himself to win over the Croats, whose

leader had declared that he was willing to accept support for the cost of Croatian autonomy from Germany.

When Hungary and Jugoslavia have thus been brought into the German orbit, with Rumania subject to effective economic—if not political—control, Germany will have established a firm base for future expansion. The direction which she then intends to take is a triple one. She aims at extending her hegemony:—

1. Along the shores of the Baltic through Lithuania and Latvia as far as the frontier of Estonia.
2. Over a semi-independent Ukrainian Republic to be carved out of Southern Poland and Southern Russia.
3. Along the Northern shore of the Black Sea, including the Crimea and the Caucasus.

Poland, a country of 150,000 square miles, with 35,000,000 inhabitants—roughly three-quarters the size and population of France—and strengthened by an alliance with the Western Powers, is an obstacle in the way of the fulfilment of this scheme, but if the earlier stages of the German plan could be carried through successfully, Poland's strategic position would resemble on a larger scale that of Czecho-Slovakia before March 15, 1939. As the toughest morsel in the meal, she is likely to be left until the German jaws, strengthened by success elsewhere, have her firmly in their grip.

Another obstacle is Turkey, the guardian of the Dardanelles, through which Germany would want the Italian Fleet to pass for the purpose of co-operating in the war with Russia that the attempt to fulfil her ambitions with regard to the Ukraine might involve. Turkey, however, owns territory in Europe, including her former capital of Istanbul, which could be seized as a hostage by German forces advancing through Rumania. Greece lies outside the course of the German flood. Her neutrality

would probably be respected in the hope that the Western Powers would respect it also.

It is difficult to see what force could be brought to bear to obstruct these German schemes at the other end of Europe. The Rumanians declare that they are ready to fight for their independence, if necessary, but not to be driven, as last time, back onto the frontiers of a Russia whom they now regard as potentially hostile, owing to Rumanian annexation of her province of Bessarabia. As one of the most responsible authorities in Rumania put it: "The Germans would be in Bucharest as quickly as the French troops could reach St. Cloud."

The Rumanians condemn the British Government's idea of an anti-aggression pact to include Russia as being a theoretical and idealistic suggestion of no practical value. As a source of potential succour they see only the Balkan Entente, consisting, besides themselves, of Turkey, Greece and Jugoslavia. The scope of that alliance is at present limited to guaranteeing the frontiers of the countries concerned against aggression from some other Balkan State.

The process proposed for the reduction to a subordinate condition of these hitherto independent States of South-East Europe is one which has up to date worked well. Resistance is made more difficult by the fact that the methods employed are manifold and secret. To Nazi experts the operation is known under the name of *aushöhlen*, which means to excavate or hollow out.

The first step is to send German agents into the coveted country. These are men of considerable ability and resource, whose identity is unknown even to the principal members of the German Government. They do not belong to the German Foreign Office, but take their orders from another Ministry.

Such agents are chosen for their knowledge of the language and institutions of the States to which they are

dispatched, and they settle there in the guise of commercial men or students. They get into touch with the leaders of discontented minorities, to whom they promise personal advancement and reward, as well as general German support for the movements they represent.

When the ground has been thus prepared, some incident invariably occurs to create an opportunity for intervention. The dismissal of Dr. Tiso, the Slovak Premier, by President Hacha of Czecho-Slovakia, was an instance of the natural manner in which such openings arise, and also of Herr Hitler's genius for exploiting them.

In the earlier stages of the extension of German frontiers these methods were not necessary, since the existence of a solid German population both in Austria and the Sudetenland provided the German Government with willing collaborators in the countries it coveted.

In order to get the German expansionist movement into its proper perspective, it is now necessary to go back some three years in the history of Europe and trace the steps by which Germany carried out the first three great moves which so thoroughly transformed the aspect of the European chess-board. Those moves were:

1. The forging of the Axis with Italy.
2. The Anschluss with Austria.
3. The annexation of the Sudetenland.

CHAPTER V

FIRST STAGES OF THE EXPANSION

FROM the fatal day when Sanctions were voted against Italy on November 18, 1935, at Geneva, the annexation of Austria to Germany became inevitable. Italy was the only country whose vital interests were directly threatened by the Anschluss—since the extension of Germany to the Brenner frontier would bring that nation to within 60 miles of Trieste at the head of the Adriatic. An outlet to the Mediterranean is one of the oldest of pan-Germanic dreams. A highly-placed Italian diplomat defined the position of his country to me, shortly after Sanctions were imposed, in the following terms:

“Italy is confronted with a momentous choice. She cannot stand alone. She must have powerful friends. We should infinitely prefer to find our friends in Britain and France, because we know that those Powers covet nothing which we possess, whereas Germany has ambitions that can only be satisfied at our expense. But if the British and French Governments continue to hold us at arm’s length, I myself, friendly disposed to those countries though I am, should advocate an Italian policy of getting together with Germany now, while we are still in a position to do so on our own terms, rather than wait until she is in a position to dictate her conditions to us.”

It was this British and French antagonism which forced Mussolini to lean on Germany, and, from that moment, Austria had no hope of survival as an independent country.

The inevitability of that development may not at first have been clear even to so shrewd an observer as Mussolini himself, for on April 29, 1936, he said to me:

"I do not believe that Hitler will try to seize Austria now. He will abstain out of consideration for Italy. Between Germany and Italy there exists a common ideology which will increase as a result of events in Spain and the growth of Communism in France."

From these words it would seem that, although Mussolini was gradually being driven into the arms of Germany, he had not yet made up his mind to the surrender of the buffer-state which Italian policy had always regarded as an important element of protection for the territory that Italy had acquired after the war on the Adriatic and in the Trentino.

When the proposal of a Customs Union between Republican Germany and Austria had been made in 1931, it was from Italy that the strongest protest came. And when Hitler had attained power, Mussolini believed that Nazi ambitions for the Anschluss would have the result of strengthening his international position, for he expected that France and Britain would be ready to make concessions to him in return for acting as the guardian of Austrian independence.

It is the traditional foreign policy of Italy to act as a balancing element between opposing forces in Europe. Her instinct would still be to follow that policy, were it not that direct physical contact with a more powerful partner restricts her opportunities of pursuing any independent international policy at all.

In the early days of the Nazi regime, Italy aimed at assuming the position of a protectress of the interests of the smaller States of Southern and Central Europe which felt themselves threatened by Germany's recovery of strength. She was thus able to make up her own quarrel with her rival on the other side of the Adriatic, Jugoslavia,

since both nations were faced by the possibility that a completely restored Germany might one day thrust down through Austria towards that sea. Austria herself, and Hungary also, were brought under Italian protection by the Rome Protocols, which consolidated the economic interests of the three States.

At the outbreak of the Abyssinian campaign, in the autumn of 1935, Mussolini held important manoeuvres of his motorized troops on the Brenner frontier. Besides the regular military attachés, he had invited a large number of foreign staff-officers, and I remember how frequently one heard the comment among them that these operations were a demonstration to Germany that the Duce's commitments in East Africa had not relaxed his resolve to defend Austrian independence.

Even after Sanctions had been in force for months, Mussolini made a remarkable statement to my friend Bertrand de Jouvenel, a distinguished French journalist, whose father had been Ambassador in Rome. This occurred on June 1, 1936, the day that M. Léon Blum formed the Popular Front Government in France.

"Tell Blum that I am ready to negotiate with France, independently of his anti-Fascist internal policy," said Mussolini. "With you I will defend Czecho-Slovakia. With me you will defend Austria. There is no other way to prevent the conquest of Central Europe by Germany. Tell that to Blum. I will sign a treaty with him to-morrow if he likes."

M. de Jouvenel went back to Paris, where the new Popular Front Prime Minister declined to see him, while the officials of the Quai d'Orsay, to whom he imparted the Duce's message, dismissed it as of no importance.

That summer of 1936 will be looked back upon as a turning-point in European history, for it was then that Mussolini began to be drawn into the German camp.

The obstacle to this step created by Italian misgivings as to the fate of Austria was removed, for the time being, by the famous "July Pact" that Dr. von Schuschnigg concluded with Germany on July 12, 1936, in which the German Government renewed the pledge contained in Hitler's speech to the Reichstag on May 21, 1935:

"Germany has neither the intention nor desire to mix in the internal affairs of Austria nor to amalgamate with or annex that country."

The *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna compared this understanding to Austria's reconciliation with Germany after the war of 1866. It looked as if Germany, in order to make a friendly gesture to Italy, had abandoned the Austrian Nazis to their fate, and the members of that party were filled with consternation. One of their leaders in Vienna made the bitter comment that Hitler and Schuschnigg had "shaken hands across a pile of corpses," for thirteen Austrian Nazis had been hanged under the Schuschnigg regime.

Other leading Austrian Nazis declared that, unless this new Austro-German pact were followed by the granting of an amnesty to the 6,000 members of their party then in gaol, many Austrian Nazis would be driven to join the Communists.

Even Herr von Papen, the German Ambassador in Vienna, who had negotiated the July Pact, remarked to me that the interests of the Austrian Nazis had to be subordinated to the greater interests of the two States concerned, and added that there would no doubt be facilities for Austrian Nazis to take refuge in Germany, where 40,000 of them were already living as refugees, so that a few more would not make any difference.

The July Pact of 1936 was the climax of Schuschnigg's four years' career as Chancellor of Austria. In return for the nominal alignment of his foreign policy with that

of Germany, he had attained formal recognition of Austria's independence.

There was no enthusiasm for the Pact in Germany. The announcement of its conclusion was read by Dr. Goebbels without any of the eulogies with which measures taken by the Nazi Government are customarily described.

Several factors had combined to bring the agreement into being. One was undoubtedly Hitler's desire to placate Italian apprehensions of the Anschluss, and to prevent Italy from resuming her position in the Stresa Front now that the Sanctions against her had been dropped. Another was the efforts of von Papen, who had been sent to Vienna with the mission of improving Austro-German relations immediately after the unsuccessful Nazi Putsch which led to the murder of Dollfuss. The third factor was the bluff put up by Schuschnigg that if he did not obtain a German pledge to respect Austrian autonomy, he might be forced to restore the Hapsburgs.

That Schuschnigg ever really contemplated calling back the Hapsburgs is more than doubtful, but he always felt that the Monarchist movement was a useful card in the game of international politics. On three occasions I questioned him about it. He always gave the answer that restoration was not an "immediate issue," but he added that Austria would never officially repudiate the possibility of resorting to it since the matter was an internal one, lying within the scope of her sovereign rights.

Privately he said that he was against bringing back the Hapsburgs because it was impossible to calculate the probable consequences, internal and external, of such a step. He had in mind the threat of the Czecho-Slovak Government to invade Austria if a restoration were attempted, together with the possibility that this might furnish Germany with a pretext for intervening as Austria's protector. There was the further risk that an attempt to preclude the possibility of an Anschluss by putting young

Archduke Otto on the throne would provoke a rising of the Austrian Nazis.

Schuschnigg always reminded me of another Catholic Chancellor I had met, whose career also ended in misfortune—Dr. Brüning of Germany. I suppose a Jesuit education leaves the same stamp upon all naturally devout characters. Both had a sort of other-worldliness about them, as of men living under a rule.

The eyes behind Dr. Schuschnigg's rimless spectacles were uncompromising in their glance. There was an expression of obstinacy on the full face beneath his crop of thick, iron-grey hair, which was confirmed by a stiffly erect bearing. His hands, on the contrary, were soft and artistic. On the right he wore a signet ring, on the other, a gold wedding ring and a jewelled one. He was always dressed in black. Such was the man who, at the beginning of 1938, was the only obstacle standing in the path of Hitler's plan to annex Austria to the Third Reich.

Dr. Schuschnigg had chosen as his confidant and Foreign Minister Dr. Guido Schmidt, a former school-fellow.

Dr. Schmidt affected a manner of gentle cynicism. His tall, slender figure and pale, clean-shaven face beneath sleek, jet-black hair were graced by an almost effeminate bearing, which disguised a restless ambition. That ambition was directed to securing his own political future by confirming himself in the good graces of the German Nazi leaders. Dr. Schmidt paid several visits to Marshal Goering at Karinhall, his country place near Berlin, and it is significant that he was staying there during the weekend in which the Anschluss was finally carried through. He thus escaped the unpleasant necessity of having to choose between loyalty to his leader, Schuschnigg, and his good relations with the Nazi Government. There can be little doubt that Dr. Schmidt played his part in the German operation of undermining the Schuschnigg Cabinet from within during the stage of preparation for the direct

challenge delivered at Berchtesgaden in February, 1938, which led on, a month later, to the actual Anschluss.

As the frailty of the July Pact became gradually apparent, Dr. Schuschnigg, with the despairing hope of strengthening Austria's position, had even made overtures to the Czech Government for closer relations of mutual support. He was strongly advised against such approaches by Mussolini, who impressed upon him that he must be careful to confine Austrian foreign policy within the limits (1) of the July Pact with Germany, and (2) of the Rome Protocols, by which Austria and Hungary were linked with Rome on matters of common economic and political interest. Austria would further be well advised, said Mussolini, to avoid any step capable of being interpreted as unfriendly towards the Rome-Berlin Axis.

Chancellor Schuschnigg resented all such attempts to restrict his field of action. Feeling himself one hundred per cent. German, though his name was Slav, he was ready to co-ordinate Austrian policy with that of the Reich, but insisted jealously upon the maintenance of Austria's independent identity. Speaking to me at Venice about Mussolini's attempts to dissuade him from making overtures to Czecho-Slovakia, he said:

"I may have entered into an agreement about my house, but that does not restrain me from opening the windows."

Schuschnigg was, in fact, an idealist, while Schmidt was a realist. It might well have been better for Austria, and would certainly have been better for Schuschnigg, if the Foreign Minister's policy had prevailed over the Chancellor's, and if the Austrian Government, instead of trying to stand in the way of the avalanche of German nationalist ambitions, had negotiated the Anschluss by consent instead of waiting for it to be imposed.

Schuschnigg, indeed, put too much trust in the July Pact of 1936. In a conversation I had with him the day

after the Pact was signed, when he received me at the small, one-storied house in the grounds of the Belvedere Palace whose barred windows then served for his protection, but were soon to be keeping him a prisoner, he expressed great confidence in the future.

"Austria has secured complete control over her internal affairs," he asserted, "but she will hold firmly to her independence." He laid stress on the fact that this treaty had been signed freely by the Government of the Third Reich. Hitler, he believed, would be forced to maintain it by considerations of personal prestige, since, except for his ten-years' non-aggression pact with Poland, it was the first foreign treaty to which he had put his name.

Schuschnigg hoped that a large number of Austrians who had hitherto been Nazis would be induced by his new pact with Germany to give up their hostility towards the Government. If they did not, he said, he would take stern measures against them, and the German Government had promised that his action would be regarded by them as a purely internal Austrian affair.

But the Austrian Nazis were quickly given to understand from Berlin that they had not been abandoned. The three leaders of the Nazi Movement in Austria at the time were Captain Leopold, a promoted non-commissioned officer of engineers, who had become a Nationalist Member of Parliament; Dr. Tavs, by birth a Sudeten German of Czecho-Slovakia, and by calling a chemist; and Dr. Jury, a medical man. After the July Pact, Dr. Schuschnigg attempted to win them over to his support by agreeing to the formation of a Committee of Seven which should represent the National Socialist point of view, and with which he would be able to keep in contact.

For a few months, it thus seemed as though Austrian independence had received a new lease of life, and that her existence as a buffer-State between Germany and Italy would be prolonged. Mussolini, angered and

embittered against Britain and France by their campaign of Sanctions, felt therefore that the way was open for him to retaliate on them, and at the same time strengthen his own position, by coming to terms of close co-operation with Germany.

His son-in-law and Foreign Minister, Count Ciano, was sent to Berlin in October, 1936, three months after the July Pact, to discuss practical arrangements for a German-Italian agreement, and returned full of enthusiasm for the scheme. On November 1 Mussolini was accordingly able to announce to the world, in a big speech at Milan, that the Rome-Berlin Axis had been brought into being.

Perhaps there were even still misgivings in his mind, for he declared at the same time that he favoured a "firm, quick and complete understanding" with Britain. It is possible that he would not have been averse from taking out a "re-insurance policy" with the British Government, for, only three days later, when I saw him in Rome, he gave the first expression to his desire for a "Gentleman's Agreement" with Great Britain. But the Spanish Civil War, which had just begun, blighted this plan, and though the "Gentleman's Agreement" was drawn up the following January, it remained stillborn.

Now that Germany had got Italy firmly linked with herself, there was no longer any need for her to consider Italian objections to the Anschluss. By the beginning of 1937, it had become clear to Mussolini that the price he would ultimately have to pay for Germany's powerful partnership was that of granting his fellow-Dictator a free hand in Austria.

There was evidence of this new Italian attitude in a conversation which I had about Austrian affairs with Count Ciano in April, 1937. "Italy cannot obstruct the Anschluss for ever," he said. "It is not, indeed, a matter which would justify a European war. Naturally, we shall do

our best to defer it as long as possible, but Italy cannot maintain an eternal '*Wacht am Brenner*.' "

Three days later, I had the opportunity of discussing the same topic with Dr. Schuschnigg, at the Hotel Daniele in Venice, where he had come to confer on Austrian foreign policy with Signor Mussolini.

He said bluntly that he had never had any confidence in Italy as a defender of Austrian independence.

"Italy's 'watch on the Brenner' was never more than a bluff," declared Dr. Schuschnigg. "Her military co-operation with Austria against Germany would be out of the question by reason of the intense anti-Italian feeling that exists in Tyrol. If the Italian troops passed the frontier, the first people they would have to fight would be the local Austrian population. One can no more imagine Austria defending her independence against Germany with the aid of Italian troops than one can picture Belgium defending herself against France with the aid of a German Army. In any case, it would not serve Austria's interest to become a battleground between Italy and Germany."

I said that this did not sound very hopeful for Austria, and Dr. Schuschnigg replied that the only policy available to him was one of "balancing." "*Primum vivere*—that is my motto," he said with a melancholy smile.

Dr. Schuschnigg was certainly under no illusions about the steady Nazi sapping and mining already going on beneath his feet. "The prominent place that racial ideals take in the programme of the Nazi Party must necessarily cause anxiety to all countries with German minorities, and most anxiety of all to a German country like Austria," he said.

During the rest of that year, 1937, Italian intervention in Spain continued to embroil Mussolini's relations with the British and French Governments until they had reached a tension almost as severe as had prevailed during the Abyssinian campaign. The consequence was a strengthen-

ing of the ties that bound Italy to Germany. These were formally confirmed by Mussolini's State visit to Hitler in September, 1937, and were expanded two months later by Italy's signature of the Anti-Comintern Pact which already linked Germany with Japan.

Under these circumstances, Italy came to disinterest herself entirely from the fate of Austria, and the way was now open for Germany to go ahead with her long-standing scheme, founded on Nazi racial principles, for bringing the Germans both of Austria and Czecho-Slovakia within the Reich.

In a conversation I had with Marshal Goering, in the course of the year 1937, he asked me what I thought would be the attitude of Great Britain towards this project. I said that it would be resented on the ground that the Germans of Austria and the Sudetenland had never belonged to Germany. He retorted, with some irritation, that they had been part of the territories of the German Empire until 1806, to which I replied that if one went so far back as that, many European boundaries would need changing.

Marshal Goering protested that the Austrians and Sudetens were German, and wanted to return to Germany. If a large group of English people had existed anywhere in a similar situation, he said, Great Britain would take up a very different attitude. I inquired whether the German-Swiss were also coveted by Germany. He said, "No, the Swiss have never been Germans. They are only a German-speaking people."

He could not understand, he said, the policy of the British Government. If one saw a great and powerful nation wanting to expand, surely it would be wise for Britain to let her do so, provided that British interests were not thereby injured. But whenever Germany put forward a claim for some vital national objective, she invariably found Britain standing in her path, scolding her like an angry governess.

I asked the Marshal whether the annexation of Austria would not weaken the newly-formed Rome-Berlin Axis on the ground that the Italians would always be uneasy lest Germany should one day push on still further to reach the Adriatic.

"If we were lords of the whole earth, we would not extend our territory to the southward beyond Austria," replied Marshal Goering with emphasis. "It would be a great mistake for us to do so. We are ready to give Mussolini any guarantees he likes about his present frontier."

It was on this basis that a tacit understanding between Italy and Germany came about, by which the Austrian question was to be considered a purely German affair with which Mussolini had nothing to do.

The Anschluss was not, as is widely believed in Britain, an invention of Herr Hitler's. It was a traditional aspiration of many South Germans, and had long figured in the programmes of several political parties in Austria. On the day after the German armistice, November 12, 1918, the Austrian National Assembly voted a resolution in favour of union with the German Republic, basing its demand upon the second clause of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, which recognized the right of national self-determination.

In 1920, a local plebiscite was organized in the Austrian provinces of Carinthia, Salzburg and Tyrol, and gave a 97 per cent. majority in favour of the Anschluss. The extension of this referendum to other provinces was forbidden by the Allies. Even the slogan "*Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Führer*," expressing the popular demand for immediate annexation, which decided Herr Hitler to proclaim the Anschluss without waiting for a plebiscite, was no more than a modernized version of the old watchword of the Austrian pan-Germanists, "*Ein Red! Ein Reich! Ein Glaub! Ein König!*" (One tongue! One land! One faith! One king!)

As far back as April 7, 1848, almost exactly 90 years before Hitler held his plebiscite on April 12, 1938, to confirm the Anschluss, another election took place in Austria for a very similar purpose. It was to choose representatives for the Frankfurt Parliament which operated for a time as the embodiment of the "German Confederation." This joint legislature in Frankfurt provided for contributions from both countries to the common defence force in time of need. Austrian troops did, in fact, help the German Army in 1864 to conquer the Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein. The semi-union of Germany and Austria broke down, however, when the two countries quarrelled over the division of the spoils of the Danish campaign, and in 1866 came the Prussian conquest of Austria at Koeniggraetz.

If the Anschluss movement had become less manifest in Austria during the years immediately preceding its fulfilment, this was because it had been driven underground under the dictatorial regime set up by Dr. Dollfuss after the Austrian Parliament was suppressed on March 4, 1933. Dr. Dollfuss and Dr. Schuschnigg ruled Austria with no light hand. Austrian Nazi leaders assured me that the figure of 2,000 dead quoted by Hitler as the losses of their party during five years of agitation was not exaggerated. They declared that after the rising in July, 1934, there had been great slaughter in the provinces. In Carinthia, on one occasion, twenty-five lorry-loads of Nazis had been brought under concentrated machine-gun fire by members of the Fatherland Front, and houses where they were holding out had been destroyed by trench-mortars.

Sixty-five death sentences were imposed during Dr. Schuschnigg's four years of office, thirteen of which were carried out, and the remaining fifty-two commuted to lifelong imprisonment. The survivors of those who had escaped the scaffold were presented to Hitler at the Vienna Rathaus in April, 1939, when he came to make the final speech of the plebiscite campaign.

Fifty thousand was the number given me at police headquarters in Vienna as the total of Austrian Nazis imprisoned in the four and a half years during which the party had been declared illegal before the Anschluss. Woellersdorf concentration camp had held as many as ten thousand prisoners at a time.

The first steps towards the Anschluss taken by the German Government were in the direction of a progressive penetration of Austria rather than of annexation. In November, 1937, Goering proposed to the Austrian Government that it should exchange raw materials, particularly timber and iron ore required for his Four Year Plan, against supplies of German goods. The suggestion was declined, as also was one for the close association of Austria's newly-formed conscript Army with the military forces of Germany.

That this indirect course was adopted is probably an indication that a certain hesitation still existed in Hitler's mind as to whether Czecho-Slovakia or Austria should be the first of the two immediate German aims to be achieved.

The balance gradually inclined in favour of Austria. Czecho-Slovakia had alliances with France and Russia, and the attempt to detach the Sudeten Germans from that country might conceivably lead to a European war, for which the German generals declared that the Army was not yet ready. Moreover, the achievement of this aim would not strengthen Germany's position for annexing Austria, whereas, if she first obtained possession of that country, she would then be able to invade Czecho-Slovakia, if necessary, from three sides.

The Austrian objective was also the easier of the two. The imminence of the Anschluss had become common diplomatic talk throughout Europe, yet there was no sign that the French Government was disposed to take any steps in Austria's defence, and it was certain that Britain would not move unless France did.

By the beginning of 1938, plans for the annexation were well advanced. The retirement of fourteen German generals on February 4, 1938, cleared out the last batch of doubters in high places. It now only remained to make Germany's intentions clear to the Head of the Austrian Government himself.

The German Minister in Vienna, Herr von Papen, kept on urging Dr. Schuschnigg to go to Germany for direct conversations with Herr Hitler. The desirability of doing so was also impressed upon him by Count Ciano when the representatives of the three States that had signed the Rome Protocols—Italy, Austria and Hungary—met for the last time in Budapest on January 2, 1938.

The Austrian Chancellor, however, recoiled from the idea of opening any fresh negotiations with the Fuhrer of Nazi Germany. He felt that though he might know where such contacts began, he could not know where they would end. He was satisfied to take up a position based on the July Pact of 1936, by which Germany implicitly recognized the independence of Austria and pledged herself not to intervene in her internal affairs, among which had been particularly specified the control of the Austrian Nazi movement.

At the beginning of 1938, however, Dr. Schuschnigg suddenly changed his attitude. After so long resisting Herr von Papen's suggestions, he decided to pay a secret visit to Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden on February 12.

In the light of after events, it would seem that it was not the feeling that his position had become weaker which led Dr. Schuschnigg to take a step hitherto so uncongenial to him, but rather the conviction that he had in his hands a trump card which he ought to lose no time in playing. It was the evidence of a plot for another Nazi putsch in Austria. This had been discovered in a raid carried out by the Viennese Police upon the offices of a branch of the illegal National Socialist Party.

Details of this "Tavs Plan," as it was called from the name of the Nazi leader in whose desk it was found, have never been published, but it is reputed to have been a scheme for provoking disorders in Austria which would justify the intervention of Germany. Bomb-attacks were to be organized in provincial towns, followed by risings of the local Nazi organizations, which were well supplied with arms.

In this document the Austrian Chancellor believed that he had proof of a legitimate grievance which would enable him to confront Herr Hitler on terms of equality. By producing evidence of the lengths which Nazi plotting in Austria had reached, he hoped to be able to secure a renewal of the pledge that the German Government would cease to encourage such activities.

What actually happened was very different from these expectations. It was the Fuhrer who violently attacked Dr. Schuschnigg for his attitude towards the Nazi Movement in Austria, and confronted him with a series of demands under the form of an ultimatum. Dr. Guido Zernatto, the Austrian Chancellor's immediate subordinate, says that his chief's first words when he met him on his return from Berchtesgaden were:

"People have often told me that Hitler was not an ordinary statesman, but a prophet. Now I know what they mean by prophet."

After formal greetings, in which the Fuhrer displayed a very cool manner, he led Schuschnigg alone into his private room, while Dr. Guido Schmidt, the Austrian Foreign Minister, remained with Herr von Ribbentrop in an ante-room, where the visiting statesmen had noticed with uneasiness the presence of General Keitel, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General Reichenau, commanding the German Army stationed at Munich, and General Sperrle, of the German Air Force.

If there is one adjective which can be applied with complete confidence to Dr. Schuschnigg it is the word

"correct." His mind is of the meticulous, formalist type, conscientious and respectful of established rules. Birth, education and experience had all intensified in the Austrian Chancellor this natural disposition towards formalism which made it difficult for him to visualize any action of a ruthless and irregular character.

With unfailing intuition, Hitler sensed this weakness in the Austrian Chancellor's mental make-up. Schuschnigg was not a man who could be frightened personally, though his courage is of that passive, martyr-like type which is stronger in the endurance of affliction than for the undertaking of daring enterprises. But he was a man who could be flustered, shocked and shaken by aggression.

Hitler knew that Schuschnigg expected to have with him a ceremonious and statesmanlike conversation. He realized that by startling his conventional mind he could throw him off his balance.

Hardly had the door closed upon the two men than the hurricane began. A full account of it was afterwards given by the agitated Austrian Chancellor to his subordinates and staff. Knowing both the parties to the scene, and the spacious, light-wood-panelled room, looking out over a magnificent panorama of the Bavarian Alps, in which it took place, I can visualize Hitler, in his plain khaki tunic, with the swastika armband and black cloth trousers, his eyes protruding and flashing in a constantly increasing paroxysm of wrathful emotion, his lips curling in sneers or drawn down bitterly at the corners, as he paced restlessly up and down, according to his habit when excited.

I can see Dr. Schuschnigg, in sombre black, visibly stiffening in surprise and consternation at such an unprecedented attack upon the head of an independent Government—his back, always straight as a drill sergeant's, becoming still more rigid, his face more set and expressionless except for the eyes flashing indignation through his spectacles.

Meanwhile, the limp, æsthetic Dr. Guido Schmidt,

the Austrian Chancellor's Foreign Minister and closest, though not necessarily most reliable, friend, was waiting in the spacious reception hall which forms the central part of the ground floor of the Berghof, hung with Flemish tapestries and old Italian pictures, and flooded with light from the vast single sheet of glass which takes the place of the entire wall on the side of the house looking down into the valley. One can imagine Ribbentrop, doubtless with a sardonic look in his cold blue eyes, listening to Dr. Schmidt's gentle voice, and making attempts at conversation as the Führer's loud and angry tones occasionally resounded from the next room.

Hitler had begun at once with a merciless flood of recrimination against Schuschnigg and his regime. The Austrian Government was a minority one, he said, abusing its position to oppress the National Socialist movement which was based on the ardent sympathy of the vast majority of Austrians.

The existing regime in Austria, declared the Führer, had never represented the will of the people. It depended on the support of foreign powers, notably Italy, France, Czecho-Slovakia and the Vatican.

In July, 1936, said Hitler, he had given Schuschnigg a chance to work loyally with Germany by signing the Austro-German "July Pact." In this, Schuschnigg had given a pledge that the policy of Austria should be inspired by the fact that she was a German State. He had been false to that promise, and had continuously and consistently worked against the great German ideal of which he, Hitler, was the creator and leader.

The persecution of the Nazi cause by the Austrian Government had become intolerable. Its suffering and patriotic members were looking to him, Hitler, for relief and rescue. They should not look in vain.

The Führer ended this tirade by telling his perturbed visitor that he had sent for him to give him one more

chance. He was going to impose more rigorous conditions for the execution of the July Pact. If the Austrian Government did not accept them, he would take instant action and sweep it out of existence.

"Make no mistake!" he shouted, "my aeroplanes will be over Vienna within an hour from the moment I give the order. The German Army is ready to cross the frontier at any time. The National Socialists all over Austria only await my word to rise and overthrow your Government. It would be mad presumption on your part to attempt to stand in my path. Don't you realize that you are in the presence of the greatest German in all history? I intend to create a Reich of 80,000,000 people."

Dr. Schuschnigg attempted to reply to this attack, though the infuriated Führer was in no mood to listen. He produced the alleged "Tavs Plan" for a Nazi putsch in Austria. He accused leading personages in the Third Reich of having encouraged plots against his Government. Hitler replied by counter-accusations that a conspiracy against his own life had been prepared on Austrian territory, and that the defensive dispositions of the Austrian Army were an indication that war with Germany was not excluded from the plans of the Government.

The Führer announced that he had prepared a list of conditions which Dr. Schuschnigg must accept if he wished to avoid instant military action against him. To confirm Germany's entire readiness for such operations, he sent for General Keitel, and questioned him in Schuschnigg's presence as to the complete readiness of the German motorized divisions. The Commander-in-Chief's assurance on this point was made the more impressive by the fact that the Chancellor, on his way from Salzburg to Berchtesgaden earlier in the morning, had seen some of these troops concentrated just outside the Austrian frontier.

The conversation ended by the presentation to Dr. Schuschnigg of a written list of German demands, which he was allowed to take into another room to study. He

sent immediately for his Foreign Minister, who had always been the advocate of closer understanding with Germany. There was no time for any recrimination between the two men about past policy, for Hitler had demanded immediate acceptance of his terms. The list of these was long. The main demands were:

1. General amnesty for all National Socialist prisoners in Austria.
2. Recognition of the National Socialist Party on a footing of complete equality with all other parties in Austria.
3. Admission of National Socialist Ministers to the Austrian Cabinet.
4. Reorganization of the Austrian Army on the same lines as the German Army, and the establishment of contact between their General Staffs.
5. Complete reorganization of the Austrian Press, and the elimination of all Jewish and anti-German influences.
6. Austrian economic organization to be assimilated with that of Germany with increased commercial exchanges between the two countries.

After Schuschnigg and Schmidt had been allowed an interval to examine these propositions, they were again summoned to Hitler's presence, and found him this time accompanied by Herr von Ribbentrop.

Before resuming the discussion, the Führer told his guests that the time was getting short, and that agreement must be quickly reached or "certain decisions" on his part would be put into operation. He warned the Austrian Chancellor against the fallacy of believing that he could expect any help from the Western Powers or from Italy. The importance of Britain in international affairs had, he said, diminished greatly of late years. The Dominions

now followed independent policies of their own, and if Britain became involved in a European war, the Empire would be quite likely to break up. France was divided by internal quarrels and in no way formidable except on the defensive.

As for Italy, Mussolini could not afford to quarrel with Germany, especially now that his resources had been heavily strained by the campaigns in Abyssinia and Spain. According to those who were in close touch with Dr. Schuschnigg immediately after this interview, the Führer, referring to Mussolini's action at the time of the Dollfuss putsch in sending Italian troops to the Brenner frontier, declared that 100,000 German soldiers would be enough at any time to sweep away the Italian Army.

In the ensuing discussion, Hitler sat for the most part in a disdainful silence, while Ribbentrop, Schuschnigg and Schmidt argued over the concessions demanded from Austria. Some of those which manifestly interfered with internal autonomy the Austrian statesmen succeeded in resisting, but they were obliged to promise:

1. A general amnesty for Austrian Nazis.
2. Freedom of political activity for them, as admitted members of the Fatherland Front.
3. Inclusion in the Government of Dr. Seyss-Inquart, a leading Austrian Nazi, as Minister of the Interior with control of the Police.
4. Closer co-operation between the armies of the two countries and the exchange of 200 officers each year.
5. The replacement of the Chief of the Austrian General Staff.
6. The appointment of a Nazi sympathizer to control the Austrian Press.

Dr. Schuschnigg raised the final objection that, as Chancellor, he was not authorized by the Constitution to

pledge his country to these terms, which could be done only by the President of the Republic, Herr Miklas. Hitler consented to give his visitor until 6.0 p.m. on February 15, three days later, for the final and formal acceptance of the conditions agreed upon at Berchtesgaden.

Luncheon had been served as an interlude in these trying discussions. At table, Hitler ate his usual simple vegetarian meal, while more ample dishes were provided for the rest of the party. He kept the conversation on general lines, and his manner was less severe than it had been during the negotiations.

It was not until late in the afternoon that the final draft of the Führer's demands had been approved, and the Chancellor was able to get into his motor-car and drive back across the frontier to Salzburg.

From there he took the night-train to Vienna. Members of his staff who met Dr. Schuschnigg at the station next morning found him tired and careworn, but extremely reticent as to what had passed between him and the ruler of Germany. In the afternoon he had a long secret conversation with the President of the Republic, and later he gave to the representatives of Britain, France and Italy some account of what had happened at Berchtesgaden, informing them that he had been confronted with a virtual ultimatum.

Following upon this, the French Government officially inquired in Vienna whether it could take any action to ease the situation, but the French Minister who called with this message at the Ballhausplatz on Tuesday, was informed by Herr Hornbostl, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, that nothing could be done, since Austria had promised to comply with the German conditions by six o'clock that same evening.

Later on it became known that the harassed Chancellor had also made repeated attempts to get into touch with

Mussolini, only to be told each time that the Duce had left Rome for the country and could not be reached.

The news of the Berchtesgaden interview surprised and puzzled Europe. Its purport was not completely known, for the Austrian Foreign Minister, Dr. Schmidt, from reasons which remained obscure, did his best to conceal the fact that it had involved an Austrian surrender.

Ten days after it had taken place, I was in Rome and saw Count Ciano at the Palazzo Chigi. I took the opportunity of asking him what he thought of the new arrangement about Austrian internal affairs which Dr. Schuschnigg had just made with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden.

"We don't like it," was Count Ciano's frank reply, "but what can Italy do? We can't say to Austria: 'We order you to remain independent!'"

"The fact is that this business of the Anschluss is not one of six million Austrians resisting the will of sixty-eight million Germans. It is two million Austrians who are resisting the will of sixty-eight million Germans *plus* the other four million Austrians."

Italy's position was clear. On that day, February 24, 1938, I said I did not believe Austria's independence would last a year. It lasted less than a month.

It will always be a disputed question as to how the voting would have gone if Dr. Schuschnigg had been able to hold the anti-Anschluss referendum that he tried to organize after his visit to Berchtesgaden had opened his eyes to the Führer's real aims. The 99·75 per cent. vote for the union registered in the Hitler plebiscite was the confirmation of an accomplished fact. In every country there is a large non-politically-minded mass of population which inclines to vote for the Government in power, especially when that Government is a totalitarian one.

It is possible that, before the Anschluss actually took place, no more than 30 per cent. of the Austrian people

were active sympathizers with the Nazi cause, since, at that time, such an attitude involved considerable risk. Even the possession of a Nazi pamphlet might entail twelve months' imprisonment. But the Austrian Nazis included the most forceful elements of the population.

The youth of the country was particularly strong for the movement. It had many supporters also among the police and Government employees, where the proportion may have reached 50 per cent. The reason was that the younger people and the minor bureaucrats were prone to contrast the limited scope of their future personal prospects—as members of a country of under seven million people—with the more promising careers which would be open to them as citizens of a united German nation of seventy-five millions.

The most potent expression of Austria's desire for inclusion with Germany was not so much the plebiscite as the vitality and high organization of the secret Nazi formations. Though their numbers formed but a small minority of the population they had set up a complete hierarchy of *Gauleiters* and *Kreisleiters* (provincial and local supervisors), with *Standartenfuhrers* and *Sturmabteilungsfuhrers* as officers for the Storm Troopers and the S.S. Guards, and also leaders for the women's, boys' and girls' organizations, together with special propagandists for work among the artisans and peasants. There was, furthermore, an active relief organization, largely conducted by women, for taking care of the families of imprisoned members of the Party.

Despite severe Government repression, ten brigades of Austrian S.S. were in existence, and even motoring and flying formations of the same corps. No list of members existed, and the organization was so conducted that each leader knew only his own men and his immediate chiefs. The Austrian Nazis referred to each other by nicknames or numbers, and all written orders were given in cipher. Their meeting-places were remote points in the country-

side, where they gathered under the pretext of sporting or pleasure excursions.

The membership of the underground Nazi formations in Vienna itself was given to me by its chiefs as follows:

Storm Troopers	16,000
S.S. or Protection Guards	6,000
Hitler Youth and German Maidens' League	10,000

In Upper Austria, which was the only province where I had the opportunity of obtaining official figures, the active members of the Nazi organization at the time of the Anschluss numbered eight thousand, exclusive of Linz. In Linz itself, which, with 108,000 inhabitants, was one of the most strongly Nazi towns in the country, there were six thousand members of the Party, including women. Of these 1,200 were Storm Troopers and 250 S.S. Guards.

The need for constant caution made it impossible for the leaders of the Nazi Movement in Austria to do more than lay down the general lines of their agitation. Actual management had to be left in the hands of subordinates, and the efficiency with which the organization throughout the land took over local police and municipal administration when the crisis unexpectedly arrived showed that their plans had been well laid.

A secret newspaper, called the *Oesterreichischer Beobachter*, had been in existence for some four years before the Anschluss. It was printed on duplicating machines, and had a circulation of 45,000. For convenience of concealment, its size was only 9 in. by 7 in. and its pages numbered eight or a dozen.

Two thousand volunteers undertook the regular distribution of this publication throughout the country. Specimens of it used frequently to be thrust into the pockets of overcoats of foreign journalists in the cloak-rooms of restaurants.

In Vienna, where the papers sold 20,000 copies, it

was printed in a room behind a cobbler's shop. From there it was carried in lorries belonging to a firm with Nazi sympathies to the goods-yard of the West Station. Here some members of the staff belonging to the party had made clandestine arrangements by which it could be distributed without drawing the attention of the police.

On one occasion an edition of the paper had been packed for transport in chests which proved too big for a doorway through which they had to pass. Some Nazi unemployed were hastily collected to carry the bundles in their arms through the slushy snow on the pavements to the waiting lorries. The work involved risk of imprisonment and, on the other hand, there was a standing reward of 10,000 schillings, or £400, waiting for any member of this band of impoverished supporters of the Nazi cause who cared to inform the police. Not only did all refrain from doing so, but they even refused to take payment for their labours.

Behind the apparently carefree and easy-going life of Austria, grim activities were being carried on. One man in Linz told me that, in the previous summer, when holiday-makers in folding canoes abound upon the Danube, he had carried explosives for use in bomb-attacks all the way to Vienna in one of these frail craft, with the certainty of the death-penalty before him if the character of his cargo were discovered. The zest with which such men related their exploits was a measure of the zealous and self-sacrificing fervour of their political convictions. Organizations existed for smuggling Party members secretly from the one country to the other. In September, 1937, 600 men were secretly conveyed into Germany to attend the annual Party Congress at Nuremberg. Most of them crossed the border by night on foot, but some of them were taken by motor-car or even train with the connivance of sympathizers among the frontier-guards. The password for these pilgrims to the Party Congress was "How do I get to Kirchschlag?"

Throughout the four and a half years of the *Verbotszeit*, while the Austrian Government had been doing its best to stamp out Nazi-ism, the movement continued to increase in strength. As members of the German Government told me later, they did not realize how far the Nazi penetration of Austria from within had gone.

"We would not have marched in so many troops," they said, "if we had known that the Schuschnigg Government was going to collapse like a house of cards."

CHAPTER VI

HOW HITLER CAME TO LINZ

WHEN the Austrian Chancellor, Dr. Schuschnigg, suddenly announced in a speech at Innsbruck, on the evening of Wednesday, March 9, 1938, his intention of holding a national plebiscite on the following Sunday, the outside world did not realize the momentous consequences that would ensue.

It was not yet known that during his visit to Hitler, at Berchtesgaden on February 12, Dr. Schuschnigg had been confronted with the demand that he would virtually hand over Governmental authority to the Nazi element in Austria and that Vienna should in future take the directives of its policy from Berlin.

"I stand or fall, together with all I aim for and believe," declared the Chancellor in announcing the plebiscite, "by the vote which the Austrian people give." It was another arbitrament, however, that was to decide his fate, and the issue was nearer than he thought.

Dr. Schuschnigg's resolve to appeal to his fellow-countrymen against the pressure to which he found himself subjected was so despairing and urgent that he would not wait for the revision of the voters' lists drawn up for the last preceding Austrian elections, held in 1930. These had not been kept up to date, as the Dollfuss Government had abolished party government in Austria in the spring of 1934.

It was a feature of the proposed referendum against

which the Austrian Nazis strongly protested that, although members of Dr. Schuschnigg's party (the Fatherland Front) could vote at any age, all other Austrians below the age of 24 were to be excluded under a clause to that effect in the Austrian Constitution. This would shut out from the polls most of the Nazi sympathizers in Austria, since the movement was strongest among the young.

So vague and all-embracing, moreover, was the appeal to be made to the people that it would be difficult for any sincere patriot to answer it in the negative. Yet its success would have the effect of giving a national mandate to a regime which exercised strong repression against the very substantial Nazi minority in the country.

The question on the voting-paper was:

"Are you for a free, German, independent and social, Christian and united Austria, for peace and work, for the equality of all those who affirm themselves for the people and Fatherland?"

Dr. Schuschnigg chose Innsbruck, the capital of his native province, Tyrol, as the place at which to announce his intention of putting this issue to the vote of the Austrian people. He was received there by cheering crowds, and flowers were flung into his car as he drove through the streets. Yet such is the fickleness of popular opinion that the inhabitants of the same city four days later displayed even greater delight at the arrival in their midst of the German troops who had come to sweep his Government into oblivion.

Since his visit to Berchtesgaden on February 12, the Chancellor had felt the grip of German control steadily closing upon him and upon Austria. The new Nazi Minister of the Interior, Dr. Seyss-Inquart, appointed to the Austrian Cabinet at Hitler's behest, at once left for Berlin, obviously to receive instructions. Returning on the eve of Dr. Schuschnigg's announcement of the plebis-

cite, he made a speech at Linz which was followed by what amounted to a mass-demonstration of National Socialism.

The Chancellor had meanwhile sent an emissary to Rome to inform Mussolini of his intention to hold the plebiscite. He hoped to gain the approval for this project of the only foreign statesman to whom he felt he could look with any chance of aid in defending the independence of Austria. Mussolini had replied bluntly: "Tell him a plebiscite would be a great mistake. It is a bomb that would explode in his hands."

The intercession with Berlin requested by the Austrian Chancellor was refused by the Duce on three grounds: (1) that it would be no use; (2) that he could not interfere in the relations of two German States; and (3) that the solidarity of the Axis made such a step impossible.

But Dr. Schuschnigg's situation was too critical for him to listen to counsels of inaction. The ground was slipping beneath his feet. He offered swift concessions to obtain the support of the Social Democrats, with whom the Government at whose head he stood had been four years previously in a state of civil war. His experts assured him that he would get between 60 per cent. and 80 per cent. of the votes cast. If this proved to be the case, he hoped that Hitler, despite his threats at Berchtesgaden, would hesitate to continue his aggressive policy towards a country the majority of whose population would thus have shown solidarity with its Chancellor in defence of its independence.

Though no one in London as yet foresaw the immense and immediate developments that were to follow on Dr. Schuschnigg's project of holding a plebiscite, it was obvious that a climax in Austro-German relations was at hand. Two days before the vote was due I flew to Vienna to see what would happen.

It was about 4.30 p.m. on Friday, March 11, that I landed at the Aspern aerodrome. The little groups of dormer-windowed, grey, eighteenth-century houses set among market-gardens, that form the suburbs of Vienna on the plain beyond the Danube, can have changed but little since the May morning in 1809 when they saw Napoleon's troops march out to be defeated by the army of the Archduke Charles. They were now to behold another memorable day in Austrian history, though as yet there were no signs of any political excitement in their shabby streets. It was only after crossing the river that I noticed a few small groups of Nazi demonstrators gathering around the Praterstern, a cross-roads that was always a favourite starting-point for political agitation.

The Hotel Bristol, on the Kärntnerring, has been for me a regular place of call ever since I first became a journalist. This curiously planned establishment, consisting of twin hotels joined by a first-floor gallery, has a dignity and tradition that recall the old spacious days of Austria, and in my memory it stands as the background of a long series of events marking progressive stages in the deterioration of Europe.

I remember the Bristol in the days when it was a resort of that rich, cosmopolitan pre-war aristocracy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which little realized how briefly its days were numbered. It was from there that I set out in July, 1914, to see the strangely informal funeral of the murdered Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, whose deaths led on to the world war six weeks later.

In the early post-war days, I can recall demonstrations by half-starved Communists outside the hotel when its restaurant within was full of new-rich profiteers, mostly Jews from what had once been the Austrian province of Galicia.

It was at the Bristol that I arrived the day after Dollfuss was murdered. I was there again to hear the announce-

ment of the "July Pact" of 1936, which for a time had prolonged the precarious independence of Austria. But none of the great changes that I had witnessed from this observation-post developed with the swiftness of the one preparing when I arrived there about 5 p.m. on the afternoon of Friday, March 11.

At that moment, Schuschnigg, so far as the outside world knew, was the established Chancellor of Austria. Preparations for the plebiscite due to begin thirty-six hours later were going steadily forward. Every advertisement-pillar on the Ring bore large placards: "Vote 'Yes' for Schuschnigg!" Handbills with the same slogan were being distributed in the streets. Yet, within an hour or two, the Austrian Government had been swept resistlessly away.

Until the last moment there were no signs of the coming swift upheaval. During the day there had been the customary casual attempts at Nazi demonstrations by groups of young men bearing forbidden swastika flags and Nazi badges. These had provoked some counter-demonstrations from Government supporters, who had pinned copies of the "Yes" voting-slips to their hatbands as an emblem. The Viennese police, acting under the restrictions of their new Nazi Minister, Seyss-Inquart, had contented themselves with keeping the rival manifestants apart.

The streets, however, were perfectly quiet as I drove to the offices of the Federal Chancellor on the Ballhausplatz, that famous eighteenth-century building, standing on an island-site in a corner by the Volksgarten, where the Vienna Congress met in 1814, within whose dingy walls the foreign affairs of Austria were conducted until after the Great War.

A guard of soldiers with machine-guns was drawn up in the broad-arched entry that leads to the irregularly-shaped courtyard in the centre of the building, but such precautions had been a matter of routine since the Nazi

attack on the Chancellery which ended in the death of Dr. Dollfuss in July, 1934.

There was, however, an odd air of suspended animation about the Chancellor's offices, as if everyone there were uneasily awaiting some new development. I found that the official whom I knew best had recently been transferred to Paris—fortunately for him, as it later proved—and I was directed to the Press Office in the Dorotheenstrasse.

There I sought out the head of the Press Bureau, Consul-General Kleinwaechter. In receiving me he probably performed the last act of his official career, for a few hours later he had been arrested. When I told this Austrian official that I had come to his country to see the plebiscite, he smiled grimly and said: "I think there are good grounds to believe that the plebiscite will be postponed."

"Postponed!" I exclaimed. "What has happened?"

"Strong objections to it have been put forward by the German Government," he answered uneasily. "I may be able to tell you more if you ring up in an hour or two. All I know is that the Cabinet is now sitting, and that information has been received that three German Army Corps are concentrated on the Austrian frontier."

It was beginning to get dark. Vienna was clearly in for an exciting evening. Groups of young men, many of them wearing swastika armlets, had collected at various points on the broad Ringstrasse. The police were eyeing them closely, but taking no action. Large crowds were streaming up and down the pavements, evidently expecting stirring developments, but uncertain what form they would take. As in most political crises within my experience, the mass of the people at this stage were behaving rather as onlookers than as participants.

Returning to the hotel, I was told that a broadcast message had just announced that the plebiscite was put

off. I telephoned to the Head of the Press Bureau for more news. His voice trembled as he answered:

"We have just heard," he said, "that the German troops will cross our frontier within the next hour. It is being given out in Germany that in Austria everyone is fighting everyone else, and that a regular blood-bath is going on here."

"But where are they expected to cross? Is the Austrian Government going to resist? Is the Cabinet still sitting?" I asked, startled to find myself thus unexpectedly at the heart of the situation that sounded likely to develop into a European war.

"I know nothing more," came the reply, "and I doubt if I shall be able to tell you anything else. I may not be here much longer."

I had hardly put down the receiver when the manager of the hotel excitedly called me to his wireless set, upon which Dr. Schuschnigg had just begun, without previous warning, his last pronouncement to the Austrian people.

"The German Government has handed to the Federal President an ultimatum requiring him to accept a new Chancellor and Government nominated by Germany."

Dr. Schuschnigg's tone was so precise and level that for an instant it seemed scarcely possible one had heard him aright.

"Unless this ultimatum is accepted at once, the German troops will instantly march into Austria. Reports have been circulated that there are disturbances here, that blood is flowing and that the present Government can no longer keep order. I declare before the whole world that these reports are false from A to Z."

"The Federal President has charged me to inform the people of Austria that we are giving way to force. To avoid the shedding of German blood, we have ordered our troops to fall back if the Germans should enter Austria."

"In this grave hour, I take leave of the Austrian people with a German word and a heartfelt wish: 'God help Austria!'"

I looked at the faces of the Austrians standing near as these fateful words came through the ether. It was astonishing how calmly they received them. The people of this historic, but now small and internally divided country had become so accustomed to political earthquakes during twenty troubled post-war years that they could hardly grasp at once the full import of this dramatic announcement.

I went out into the street. For some moments after the Chancellor's well-known tones had ceased to resound from the public loud-speakers on the electric-light standards, there was a general hush, as if the crowd of listeners were discussing this breath-taking development among themselves.

And then, suddenly, out of the distance and the darkness, burst a staccato chant, which swelled in volume till everyone in sight seemed to have taken it up. For a moment, I could not catch the words. Then I recognized them—*"Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!"*

The whole city was shouting it now—the Nazi victory pæan. Hitler had won, and with a single voice Austria was rallying to the cause of the conqueror.

Never have I seen so swift a transformation in the appearance of a city as took place in Vienna that evening. Within half an hour, swastika flags were appearing everywhere, as though these forbidden articles had been kept in instant readiness for the occasion. All Vienna seemed to be forming up in procession. Wherever a band of young men in white shirts or wearing Nazi armlets appeared, the passers-by would fall in behind them, until every main street in the city was full of columns marching and counter-marching, with no particular destination, but solely for the excitement of parading, exchanging Hitler

salutes, chanting "*Sieg Heil!*" and singing the Horst Wessel song.

At 8.15 p.m. I was called back to the wireless. Dr. Seyss-Inquart was speaking. In his capacity of Minister of the Interior, he called for order and discipline. Manifestations of Nazi delight must not, he said, be of an "excessive character." And he added a significant warning:

"If, as is possible, German troops arrive on Austrian soil, under no circumstances is any resistance to be offered to them, by the national forces or by any others."

At 10.30 p.m. it was broadcast that President Miklas had appointed Dr. Seyss-Inquart to the vacant post of Chancellor.

This was the Austrian Government's final surrender to pressure from Berlin which had been continuous throughout the day. The first ultimatum delivered on that fateful Friday was conveyed to Dr. Schuschnigg by Dr. Seyss-Inquart and his Nazi colleague in the Austrian Government, Dr. Glaise-Horstenau. They had demanded that the plebiscite announced by the Chancellor should be annulled by 1 p.m. This was at first refused, but later conceded.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, Dr. Seyss-Inquart had informed Dr. Schuschnigg that the German Government required him to hand in his resignation as Chancellor by 5.30 p.m. To this, Dr. Schuschnigg also returned at first an emphatic refusal, but he yielded when the ultimatum was renewed, with prolongation of the time till 7.30 p.m., by two direct emissaries of the German Government, Herr Keppler, Hitler's Commercial Councillor, who had just arrived from Berlin by air, and Herr von Stein, of the staff of the German Embassy in Vienna.

Even now I cannot understand why Vienna should that night have broken out into such a pandemonium of delight. Nazi organizers, of course, began the demon-

strations, but the people joined in with a zest that seemed the result of long-repressed feelings finding a sudden outlet. Could this be Vienna the Red, reputed as the capital of Communism in Central Europe, the stronghold of the Jews? Young and old, men and women of all types and classes were cheering for Hitler and Germany. All traffic was stopped, for the crowds with their hoarse chant of "Heil Hitler!" filled the roadway, which was littered with propaganda handbills for the plebiscite bearing the appeal "Vote 'Yes' for Schuschnigg!" and now being trampled underfoot.

At the principal street-crossings I saw police *chars-à-bancs* waiting—"alarm-lorries," as they are called. The policemen in them were standing up, returning the Nazi salutes of the hysterically excited crowd. Surely there must be counter-demonstrations somewhere—but telephone-inquiries to the Socialist suburbs of the city brought the news that there, too, rejoicing seemed general, and that in places anti-Jewish looting and breaking of windows had already begun. The only discoverable symptom that Vienna was now anything but ardently pro-Nazi was the reported attempt of a procession of workmen to march past the offices of the Fatherland Front, the headquarters of Schuschnigg's party, giving the clenched fist Communist salute. It had been prevented by the police.

I noticed several lorries careering fast along the streets, filled with young men in white shirts and swastika armbands, most of whom carried rifles which had evidently just been issued to them. These were the hitherto illegal Austrian Storm Troopers and S.S. Guards, who were being armed as auxiliaries to the police. Until their weapons were called in again the following day, such young men were a law unto themselves. They were wildly excited, and it is surprising that they did not do more damage than actually occurred. Their speedy disarmament was due to the discovery that other gangs, described as young Communists who had assumed the

Nazi emblems, were looting private houses under pretext of "requisitions."

I was in the Telegraph Office that evening when a band of these youthful Nazis arrived to mount guard there. In that grimy yellow building is a large and dingy room surrounded by desks and telephone-boxes and known as the *Journalistenzimmer*. It served as a centre for the foreign correspondents in Vienna, though mainly used by those of Central European countries. Looking in there about ten o'clock, I found it thronged with newspapermen of various nationalities, most of them Jews.

Vienna had been the haven of Jewish journalists expelled from Germany. For them and many others in like case, their refuge had suddenly become a trap. As yet they did not realize how completely they were caught. The most they seemed to apprehend was the establishment of a thoroughgoing Austrian Nazi regime.

While everyone in the room was busy writing or telephoning, three or four youths in white shirts suddenly appeared in the *Journalistenzimmer*. They had rifles in their hands, and their leader brought his butt down with a crash upon the wooden floor while the others levelled their muzzles threateningly at the backs bent over the desks about the room.

"*Niemand darf hinaus!*" shouted the chief of these young irregulars, adding that no one would be hurt if they stayed quiet. More of the same kind were crowding into the room, obviously eager to assert their authority but uncertain what to do next.

I was surprised by the complete calm with which the Viennese journalists received this threatening incursion. To a British correspondent, with his passport in his pocket, armed Nazis were not likely to be dangerous. But these Viennese Jews and German refugees were at their mercy. Yet no one showed any sign of alarm, and the rapid writing of messages went on without interruption.

Rather disconcerted by the lack of reaction to his challenge, the leader of the Storm Troopers began to post his men in different parts of the room. On this a uniformed postal official, employed to register Press telephone-calls, approached him with characteristic Austrian politeness.

"Excuse me if I point out that you are disturbing these gentlemen," he said. "They are busy writing messages for their newspapers."

"But they must not send any," was the indignant rejoinder. "I am here to prevent that!"

The postal official sturdily defended his journalistic clients. To stop the transmission of Press messages, he declared, would require a written order from the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs.

A compromise was effected on the understanding that the Storm Troopers were to "censor" all dispatches sent, and while the vigilance of the young Guards was thus distracted, I slipped out to the Marconi wireless office round the corner which, as I expected, had been overlooked by the self-appointed custodians of the Press, and whence I was able to telegraph without interference.

During the whole of that night, Vienna was a carnival city. At 4 a.m. when I went to bed, the tramping and the cheering of the joyful processions up and down the Ring still continued unceasingly. I saw bodies of police marching in formation and waving the swastika-flag which a few hours before it had been their duty to suppress. My own hotel had produced a huge Nazi banner which hung from its topmost tier of windows.

Before dawn, important officials from Germany had already begun to arrive in the Austrian capital. Herr Rudolf Hess, the Führer's Deputy, came from Berlin, and Herr Himmler and Herr Heydrich, the Chiefs of the Gestapo, with thirty high officials of the German Secret Police who had specialized in Austrian affairs, flew from

Munich during the night in two aeroplanes, so tightly packed that some of them had had to stand all the way. They at once took over control of the Austrian Police. One of Herr Himmler's first decrees was to abolish the rubber truncheon as a weapon of that force on the ground that it was "too degrading an instrument to be used against Germans."

At 8 a.m. on Saturday, March 12, I woke to the drone of aeroplane engines. Looking from my balcony, I saw the sky above the centre of Vienna swarming with low-flying German machines. Dozens of three-engined, grey Heinkel bombers were cruising so close overhead that one could plainly see the swastika painted on their rudders. As they roared to and fro, a black puff, like smoke, would suddenly appear in the air behind them and break up into a multitude of fluttering hand-bills, which drifted down like snowflakes and lay almost as thickly on the streets. They bore the message, "National Socialist Germany salutes National Socialist Austria." General Bodenschatz, Marshal Goering's Chief-of-Staff at the Air Ministry, told me next day that there were three hundred of these machines over Austria that morning, and that they dropped 135,000,000 fly-sheets with a message of greeting to Austria, all of which had been printed in a single night in different parts of Germany.

The weary demonstrators had at last left the streets, and Vienna was a comparatively deserted city when, at 8.30 a.m., I drove once more to the Bundeskanzleramt, or Chancellor's offices. As I got out of the car, at the entrance to the Chancellery, a blue-uniformed porter stepped forward taking off his cap, and bowed me towards the main staircase. I assumed that this was only customary Viennese politeness, to which I attributed also the fact that the sentry at the foot of the curving staircase presented arms. I was received, however, with similar honours by two more sentries at the top, where an attendant flung

open a white-and-gold door leading into a room in the corner of the building. It was the one in which Dollfuss was shot as he ran across it from his own office next door in the attempt to reach a secret staircase-exit from the Chancellery.

A young man, wearing a swastika armband, was sitting at a desk in this crimson-and-gold apartment. He rose to his feet as I was shown in, and raised his arm with a "Heil Hitler!"

Two or three other men were standing about in waiting attitudes, and seemed to regard me with some curiosity. I introduced myself, and said that I had come to see if it was possible to be received by the new Chancellor, Dr. Seyss-Inquart.

"I am afraid it will be difficult. The Chancellor is just about to hold his first Cabinet Council," said the young man, who turned out to be Dr. Hammerschmidt, the new Chancellor's *chef de cabinet*.

It immediately flashed into my mind why I had been received with such attentions by the minor officials of the Chancellery outside. Since the newly-appointed Nazi Ministers were almost entirely unknown men, anyone who drove up that morning just before the time fixed for the Cabinet meeting was assumed to be a member of the Government.

After consulting his chief, Dr. Hammerschmidt came out again to say that the Chancellor would see me for a moment before his meeting with his colleagues began.

Dr. Seyss-Inquart rose from the broad flat desk across which, during the previous twenty years, I had talked with several Austrian Chancellors in times of national crisis, though none so acute as this.

There was nothing aggressive or dominating in his bearing. Like his predecessor, Dr. Seyss-Inquart had the look rather of a student than of a man of action. Forty-six years old, a lawyer, and the son of a professor, he had only recently become known as a political figure, even to

his fellow-countrymen. He is tall and broad-shouldered, with sandy hair, and wore a grey suit with a dark red tie. The grey eyes behind his horn-rimmed spectacles gave an impression of shyness and fatigue. His quiet deliberate voice sounded weary too, as was natural enough after a sleepless night of such momentous happenings.

I asked the new Chancellor if he would tell me how these stirring events had come about.

"The plebiscite that had been fixed for to-morrow was a breach of the agreement which Dr. Schuschnigg made with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden, by which he promised political liberty for National Socialists in Austria," replied Dr. Seyss-Inquart. "It had the appearance but certainly not the character of a national referendum. Very many Austrian National Socialists would have been disqualified from voting by the age-qualification.

"In view of this injustice, the German Government called for the postponement or cancellation of the plebiscite. This was at first refused by Dr. Schuschnigg.

"That refusal constituted an open breach of the Berchtesgaden Agreement, guaranteeing to the Austrian National Socialists a fair share in the political life of the country. The position was accordingly put back to what it had been before the Berchtesgaden meeting took place.

"President Miklas was therefore called upon to form a new Austrian Government which would fulfil its engagements. He asked me to undertake this task."

I inquired whether the actual composition of the new Austrian Cabinet had been dictated by Berlin. The Chancellor replied that it was he who had chosen his colleagues, by inviting some of his old friends to help him.

"Und was wird jetzt aus Oesterreich, Herr Bundeskanzler?" I asked him. "What will the future of Austria be?"

Dr. Seyss-Inquart's reply was significant. It was made at about nine o'clock on the morning of Saturday, March 12, only thirty-six hours before the annexation of Austria to Germany was proclaimed.

"She will remain independent, but fully conscious of her unity with the German race. *Oesterreich wird keine deutsche Provinz werden.* (Austria will not become a German province.)"

"I suppose you will have a Customs Union with Germany, and amalgamate the party formations in the two countries?"

"That is quite possible," said the new Chancellor, "but it would not affect our independence."

I asked whether there would be any impeachment of the members of the Schuschnigg Cabinet. Dr. Seyss-Inquart said "No," and added that his personal relations with Dr. Schuschnigg remained correct, though not friendly. His predecessor was now confined to his house for his personal safety, he said, but he had a guard of his own inside the building with him. Everything was quiet in the provinces, and the militia of armed Storm Troopers which had been raised the previous evening was being disbanded, as its services had been found unnecessary.

In reply to the question whether any German troops were yet in Austria, Dr. Seyss-Inquart said reports had reached him that the first detachments of them had arrived at the Austrian frontier-towns of Braunau, Salzburg and Kufstein between seven and eight that morning.

From the Chancellery, I drove to the white house in the corner of the grounds of Schloss Belvedere, which Dr. Schuschnigg had taken as his residence when he became Chancellor. It is a modest little building, presumably intended for some functionary about the Court, and is separated from the avenue outside by a high wall. A group of police, armed with carbines, was on guard at the tall wooden double entrance-gate. Some young Storm Troopers in plain clothes, of the type that had occupied the Telegraph Office the previous night, were also standing about. One of the policemen asked my business as I approached the gate. I said I wanted to see Dr.

Schuschnigg. Upon this a Storm Trooper intervened energetically.

"No one can visit Dr. Schuschnigg," he said. "He is a prisoner, and not allowed to have communication with anyone."

I said that I knew the former Chancellor personally, and should like to see for myself that no harm had come to him. I was answered this time by the policeman, who, I thought, seemed rather resentful of the presence of the young Storm Troopers.

"We are here to prevent that," he said, "and he has a military guard inside as well."

Dr. Schuschnigg had returned home directly after making his broadcast renunciation of the Chancellorship the night before. There were tears in his eyes, I was told later, as he turned from the microphone and walked down the curving staircase to his car waiting under the entrance archway of the Chancellery. It was then 7.30 p.m.

"Drive to the Aspern aerodrome," an officer of his staff ordered the chauffeur excitedly.

The ex-Chancellor interrupted him.

"I am not going to run away," he said. "Drive me home!"

Then a characteristic impulse occurred to him. He told the chauffeur to go to the school where his only son, twelve years old, was being educated. The boy was already in bed. Dr. Schuschnigg waited while he was called and dressed. Together they drove to the cemetery where the child's dead mother lay. It was very dark in the unlighted graveyard, and the Chancellor borrowed an electric torch from his chauffeur to help him find the grave. In the cold night, father and son knelt beside it to pray. When they had done, Dr. Schuschnigg was driven to his house in the grounds of the Belvedere Palace, and the boy was taken back to school.

Before dawn next day, police had been posted outside the entrance to the ex-Chancellor's villa. He has ever since

remained a close prisoner of the new regime in Austria, being moved about a month after the Anschluss to the headquarters of the Secret Police in the Hotel Metropole.

It was originally the intention of the German Government to call Dr. Schuschnigg as a witness in a re-trial of the case of the two Nazis, Planetta and Holzweber, who were executed for the murder of Dollfuss in July 1934. But that project was subsequently dropped. So completely has he been cut off from the outside world during his confinement that the only incident of it known is that he remarried by proxy some ten weeks after it began.

Shortly after the tragic death of his first wife in a motor-accident outside Linz on July 13, 1935, the former Chancellor met Countess Vera von Czernin-Fugger, the divorced wife of Count Fugger, a banker. Dr. Schuschnigg and she were drawn together by a common interest in music, and there were frequent reports before the Anschluss that he had obtained the necessary dispensation from the Pope to marry, despite her divorce from her former husband. After the German occupation of Vienna, during the time that Dr. Schuschnigg was interned at his residence in the grounds of the Belevvedere Palace, the Countess obtained permission to superintend his household there.

The wedding ceremony by proxy was performed at the Dominican Church in Vienna on June 1. The ex-Chancellor's brother, Dr. Arthur von Schuschnigg, took the marriage-vows in his name, and his father, Major-General Arthur von Schuschnigg, who has since died, was one of the witnesses.

Since their marriage, the Countess has been allowed to visit her husband once a week in the suite of rooms at the Hotel Metropole where he is kept a prisoner.

At the British Legation on that first morning after Dr. Schuschnigg's fall from power, I found Mr. (now Sir) Charles Palairet and his staff already coping with the first onset of the flood of frantic inquiries from England

about Austrian relatives and friends that was for weeks to submerge, first the Legation, and then the Consulate-General into which it was converted.

The Austrian frontier was closed in the course of Saturday, March 12, against all attempts to leave the country, and an American colleague who went down there told me that at Engerau, which was then the Customs post of a small piece of Czech territory lying on the Austrian side of the Danube opposite Bratislava, he had seen a string of empty motor-cars, abandoned by their owners, who had left them there and gone off on foot to try to slip across the border at some unguarded point.

Driving along the Kärntnerstrasse, I noticed the proprietors of many Jewish shops in that principal thoroughfare standing at their doors, looking with manifest anxiety at the changed aspect of the city, where almost everyone was now wearing a Nazi badge and constantly exchanging "Heil Hitlers!" with other passers-by. It was easy to guess at the thoughts behind these uneasy Semitic countenances. They were debating whether to abandon everything and bolt, or whether to hold on and hope for the best. Those who hesitated were, indeed, lost.

At about noon, I went to the *Journalistenzimmer*, now freed from its overnight occupation, to listen to the proclamation which Dr. Goebbels was to broadcast in the name of Herr Hitler.

"Since this morning," declared Dr. Goebbels triumphantly, "the soldiers of the German armed forces are marching everywhere across the German-Austrian frontiers. Tanks, infantry divisions, detachments of Storm Troopers on the ground, and the German Air Force in the blue sky, are advancing to secure for the Austrian people the opportunity within a very short time to decide their own fate by a real plebiscite."

Then followed a surprising announcement. Hitler himself had left Berlin for Munich by air that morning and was now motoring towards the Austrian frontier.

That the Führer would come far into Austria seemed to me at the moment in the highest degree improbable, but if that were indeed his intention the main interest of the whole situation would clearly be wherever he was.

Hiring a car, I set out westward towards the frontier, 180 miles away. At Sieghartskirchen, a village on the outskirts of the capital, a cordon of white-shirted Storm Troopers, armed with rifles, barred the road and demanded passes. The chauffeur produced his identity papers with much indignant grumbling and we were allowed to continue without hindrance through the Wienerwald, through St. Polten, a textile town, once very Red, and on past the great Abbey of Melk, standing on a high cliff above the Danube, which is the richest religious foundation in Austria.

All the way we kept on meeting columns of Austrian troops, carried in lorries, who were falling back on Vienna, having evacuated their barracks in the frontier-towns to make room for the advancing Germans. I looked closely to see if there were any sign of depression or resentment among the soldiers thus unexpectedly ordered to abandon their posts. On the contrary, they all seemed happy, and their cars were decorated with swastika flags and green branches, as if for a festival.

Enns, just over one hundred miles from Vienna, marks the boundary between Lower and Upper Austria, and here, at 4.0 p.m., I met the German advance-guard, consisting of twenty-four cars of the Twenty-First Armoured Car Company. They were parked by the roadside, surrounded by admiring villagers who were fraternizing with the German troops.

A bitterly cold wind was blowing, and the men looked tired. They said they had crossed the frontier at Passau early that morning in a snowstorm, the road being in very bad condition. Casually, one of the soldiers mentioned that in passing through Linz, ten miles behind them, they had heard that Hitler was due to arrive there at five o'clock.

Hitler in the heart of Austria! History was indeed being made at high speed. Hurrying on to Linz to get there before him, I found at least 60,000 people crowded into the long town-square, in the midst of which rises a tall, white marble, baroque "Column of the Trinity."

The roofs and windows of the high-gabled sixteenth-century houses all round were crowded with eager onlookers, and festooned with swastika flags. Most significant of all—the traffic was being controlled, here on Austrian soil, by green-uniformed German police, while the black-coated Austrian constables did subordinate work in the background.

The small Rathaus at Linz is one of a row of houses on the eastern side of the square. To gain entrance to it entailed much argument with the excited Nazi officials who formed a guard outside, and had strong misgivings about admitting a foreigner. Someone who happened to have heard my name at length was found, and I was taken up to a first-floor room which was packed with the local Party leaders, many of them in odd uniforms compounded of any semi-military garments or equipment they had at hand.

On a table lay a stretcher bearing a member of the hitherto illegal Austrian S.S. He had been wounded two nights before in an encounter with the police in which one man had been killed.

From the iron balcony outside one looked down upon the intensely excited multitude of Austrians awaiting the Führer's arrival. Their front rank consisted of a row of white-shirted Hitler Youth—a forbidden organization until the day before, who, with their thin clothes and bare knees, were frozen blue with cold in the bitter wind. But everyone was cheering, singing or chanting in unison a slogan which I had not heard before. It was: "*Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Führer!*" and embodied Nazi Austria's demand for an immediate Anschluss. German bombing-planes were constantly passing in formation overhead.

Captain Ziebland, a local piano-dealer who had been

a naval officer during the war, was acting as announcer at the microphone on the town-hall balcony. To my consternation I suddenly heard him saying to the crowd:

"Here is the well-known English correspondent, Ward Price, who has just arrived to see the Führer come back to his home-town. He will speak a few words to you."

I protested that I was there only as an onlooker and that my German was not good enough for public speaking, but everyone on the balcony joined in the request, and being in a sense their guest, I complied by addressing to the enthusiastic people of Linz the commonplace words: "I congratulate you very heartily." At the moment, I believed that the microphone was connected simply with the loudspeakers in the square below. Only later did I learn that my brief and banal remark was relayed over most of the broadcasting systems of Europe, and had been represented by critics in the Press of other countries as an ardent pro-Nazi harangue.

It soon began to get dark, and still Hitler did not come. The people outside had already been waiting for five hours under conditions so arctic that one was glad of a greatcoat even inside the crowded Rathaus. Some of them had been standing in the square throughout the whole of the previous night in expectation of the German troops.

Messages at length arrived that Herr Hitler had visited Braunau on the Austro-German frontier, driving past the house where he was born, which has now become the Gasthaus Pommern. He had gone on to Ried and Lambach to inspect some of the German troops, and from there was motoring to Linz.

A roar of cheering broke out from the far end of the square as some cars drove down the narrow lane dividing the crowd. In them were Herr Himmler, the Head of the German Police and Protection Guards, together with Dr. Seyss-Inquart and his Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Glaise-Horstenau, who had driven out from Vienna to meet Hitler here.

Herr Himmler was the first leading German I had seen in Austria. Normally the pale face behind his rimless eyeglasses bears the expression of a rather severe schoolmaster. To-day it was aglow with excitement.

"What a grand thing it is to see a people reunited!" he exclaimed. "I have never been so much moved in my life."

General Daluge, Chief of the German uniformed Police, was with him.

"Men and women rushed up to kiss our hands wherever we stopped on the way here," he said. "All Austria is weeping for joy. If only the whole world could see this spectacle! Then it would know that what is happening has not been forced, but is really spontaneous."

The Nazi leaders of Linz were eager to hear from me whether Britain understood the keenness of the great majority of Austrians to join up with Germany. "I suppose it is difficult for your people to feel so strongly as we do now about anything—except horse-racing, perhaps," said one man, quite seriously. "You have never had to live under a reign of terror such as we have experienced here during the past four years."

Herr Himmler made a short speech from the balcony.

"This land where Hitler was born," he said, "is now free again, and, after centuries, comes back to its great German home. We shall have a single Reich and a single Führer."

"*Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Führer!*" echoed the great crowd delightedly, shivering more than ever in the bitter wind.

Still no Führer appeared. I talked to two middle-aged men, named Steinberger and Rahmer, who had been at school with him in the Steingasse. Hitler had only once been back to Linz since then, they told me, when he came secretly in 1932 to visit the grave of his parents in Leonding nearby. They seemed to remember nothing outstanding about their distinguished schoolmate, except that he was

the only one in their class to wear long trousers, and that he did not work conspicuously hard, but another school-fellow who was found for me, Herr Jungmayer, recalled Hitler as a big boy, bold and rowdy, yet inclined to keep very much to himself, and with no taste for work except history.

"We used to play at Indians on the military parade-ground," he told me. "But Hitler said that Indians was not a suitable game for German boys. The South African War was on then, and he insisted on our dividing ourselves into Boers and British. He always claimed the part of General de Wet, the Boer leader, for himself. We used to dig trenches, which the Boers held triumphantly against British attacks."

It was eight o'clock when Hitler at last arrived, greeted by a continuous roar of "*Heil! Heil! Heil!*" that rose out of the darkness like the sound of the sea beating upon rocks. He was preceded and followed by an escort of military-cyclists and motor-cars, the rear of which was brought up by two long, slender anti-tank guns, towed by six-wheeled lorries.

Straining our eyes into the shadowy confusion of the square below, we could see him surrounded by the frantic and surging crowd, standing in an open car, with the collar of his long-skirted overcoat turned up, raising his arm in salute, but otherwise motionless.

Himmler and Seyss-Inquart had driven out to meet him on the road, and now, accompanied by a wave of excited Nazis, they brought him up the vaulted stone staircase of the Rathaus into the big room overlooking the square.

I was the only foreigner there, and have so often found myself in close contact with Hitler at critical moments in his career that he greeted me with a smile almost of expectation.

"*Na, Ward Price! Immer da!*" he said.

The local Nazis, with shining eyes, were milling round him, eager to salute the Leader for whom they had risked and borne so much, and on whom most of them were setting eyes for the first time. Profound as the effect of this triumphal return to the home of his boyhood must have been on Hitler's sensitive temperament, his face showed none of his emotion. It was set in that stern expression which has become habitual with him on all public occasions except when he is speaking. He went up to the wounded man lying on the table to ask how he had been hurt. He shook hands rapidly with the local Nazi notables, whose names were shouted to him above the din of the cheering outside which filled the room.

I watched the turbulent scene around me with a mind full of acute speculation. Why had Hitler come so swiftly to Austria? Would he declare the Anschluss immediately, or had Seyss-Inquart been right in telling me that very morning that Austria would not become a German province?

It seemed extraordinary, with all Europe in a ferment over the events of the previous day that the German Chancellor should be able to spend a whole day motoring about the country, instead of keeping in continual touch with events and planning his next move. That he could do so was significant of the difference between the heads of authoritarian and democratic Governments. On them, such times of crisis would have imposed the necessity for constant consultation with their colleagues. They would be obliged to make statements in Parliament, answer hostile opposition questions, and keep in touch with public opinion.

The actions of the German Führer are subject to no such restraints. Before he launches a new enterprise, he can plan the details of it, free from all distraction and antagonism, in those solitary interludes of apparent inaction that he spends at Berchtesgaden. Then, when the time comes, he is able to go straight ahead, clear as to his objective, "with the confidence of a sleep-walker."

Dr. Seyss-Inquart stepped through the window into the floodlights. Hitler stood just behind him. Room had been made for me also on the balcony, and I looked down in the darkness upon the shadowy host that filled the square. One could feel the intense emotion of those sixty thousand people almost as if it were a physical force.

"*Mein Fuhrer!*" began Dr. Seyss-Inquart, and went on to deliver a speech which in effect laid Austria at Hitler's feet, for, as Chancellor of Austria, he declared the clause of the Peace Treaty which forbade the union of Austria with Germany to be henceforth null and void. Hitler's eyes were meanwhile ranging over the buildings opposite, dimly seen in the darkness. He was evidently recalling to his mind the Linz that he had left as a working-class schoolboy thirty-five years before.

The Austrian Chancellor's speech was long and he is not a very stirring orator. The Fuhrer's was the voice the crowd had been waiting all those hours in the bitter cold to hear, and Dr. Seyss-Inquart's words soon began to be drowned by a chanted chorus. In six fierce, staccato beats—one, two; one, two; one, two—these 60,000 Austrians thudded out their slogan: "*Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Fuhrer.*"

At that sound, in the glare of the floodlit balcony, I saw Hitler's cold blue eyes flash with sudden alertness, and then become fixed in reflection. He lowered his gaze, and what I can only describe as a knowing smile came over his features. Twice he nodded his head, slowly, and the thought flashed into my mind, "He feels that he is hearing the *vox populi*, demanding the Anschluss without delay."

A moment later he stepped forward to face the frenzied crowd. Then amid a silence of wrapt attention he spoke.

"When I left this town as a boy," he said, "I was filled by the same faith as I am to-day. In calling me from here to lead the Reich, Providence conferred on me a mission which can only be to unite my dear homeland with Germany."



HITLER ON BALCONY OF LINZ RATHAUS, MARCH 12, 1938

His voice trembled. The depth of his conviction was unmistakable. He went on to tell the people listening to him, both there in Linz and all over Germany and Austria by wireless, that they would soon be summoned to vote upon this question. He did not, however, in so many words declare the union of the two countries. It may well be that he was waiting for the approving reply on that issue which he was to receive next day from Mussolini.

Hitler finished his speech amid another tremendous outburst from the wildly rejoicing crowd.

For a time, he remained standing with his arm raised in salute, and, smiling down on yet another great personal triumph achieved under circumstances for ever memorable.

Talking to these Austrians and listening to their cheers, one got the impression that they had no feeling of being annexed by Germany. Their interpretation of the day's events was rather that one of their own fellow-countrymen, born and bred in their midst, had come home to them, bringing Germany with him.

As Herr Hitler turned to leave the balcony amid the deafening clamour of the frenzied crowd, he saw me behind him.

"Well, Ward Price," he exclaimed jubilantly, with a jerk of his head towards the tumult below, "is there any compulsion about that?"

CHAPTER VII

FINIS AUSTRIÆ

FROM the Führer's staff I had learned that he was going to spend the night in Linz at the Hotel Weinzing, which stands by the Danube bridge. Making my way down there through the seething crowd, I found the place a jostling mass of high German party officials and officers of the Army and Air Force. All the rooms had been requisitioned, but Herr Edi Weinzing, one of the three brothers who own the hotel, obligingly said that, as he would certainly not be able to get any sleep that night, I could have his bed.

Linz had become the scene of a great and dramatic event in European history. The fate of Austria was to be decided in this small hotel, where Hitler was in constant conference with Generals Brauschitsch and Keitel, the Army chiefs, who had arrived from Berlin, and other members of his staff. He spent much time also telephoning to Berlin. Downstairs, the little entrance-hall and narrow passages were crowded with Government officials suddenly summoned to carry through the task of annexing Austria. The scene was as entirely masculine as a battlefield. I saw hardly a single woman enter the Hotel Weinzing during the whole week-end.

The telephone-board behind the porter's desk had been handed over to a military operator who was constantly putting through "*Staatsgespräche*" or "Government calls" to all parts of Germany and Austria. Motorcyclists, looking like robot-soldiers in their crash-helmets

and one-piece rubber overalls, kept on arriving with dispatches, their faces chilled red and blue by the bitter night wind.

In the place where all this high-speed alteration of the map of Europe was going on, I found myself not only the sole foreigner and newspaper-correspondent, but even the only man not in some kind of uniform. For thirty-six hours I was to watch the carrying through of the final phase of the disappearance of a once-mighty country.

Under such conditions the process necessarily had a haphazard and improvised appearance, but I do not doubt that, with characteristic German thoroughness, every detail of such an eventuality had been long prepared. When Hitler made up his mind to annex Austria he needed only to send to his Chancellery in Berlin for the file marked "Anschluss" in order to have all the necessary schemes, schedules, time-tables, regulations and decrees before him.

Most of the members of Herr Hitler's immediate entourage I know well, through having met them on many outstanding occasions in the eventful history of Germany since the Nazi regime was established. Here in the Hotel Weinzinger was Herr Himmler, Head of the German Police and of the S.S. Guards. With him were the tall, handsome young chief of the Secret Police, fair-haired Herr Heydrich, who wears the Nazi badge both of athletic and equestrian skill on his black tunic, and big-framed General Daluge, Head of the uniformed Police, in his grey-green uniform.

General Bodenschatz was also there in Air Force blue. He is the Chief of Marshal Goering's Staff as Air Minister, and lost two fingers of his right hand as a war-pilot in "Richthofen's Circus"—a handsome, bluff, hearty, debonair man in the early forties. The humorous face and lively eyes of Dr. Otto Dietrich, Chief Press Officer of the German

Government, are always to be seen in the Führer's entourage. Herr Spitzzy, who was on Herr von Ribbentrop's personal staff at the London Embassy, was another who had arrived in Linz. He is a dark, good-looking young man, Austrian-born, and formerly a cadet in the then secret Austrian Air Force.

Also present, were the gigantic personal adjutant of the Führer, Herr Brückner, formerly one of Germany's best-known tennis players, and Herr Schaub, another adjutant, who has been with him ever since he was a prisoner in Landsberg fifteen years ago. These, with many others of Herr Hitler's staff and liaison officers, were here on Austrian soil, engaged in adding a country of seven million inhabitants to the Reich as cheerfully and almost as casually as if it were a routine occurrence.

Could one have read at that moment the accounts being published in other countries of the "ruthless exercise of brute force" by which Germany was seizing Austria, it would have been hard to believe that so agreeable and friendly a set of people as the Führer's staff were the principal agents in such a process. Though the outside world was denouncing German aggression, there was no aggressive atmosphere in the Hotel Weininger during that memorable week-end. The general spirit among these Ministers and officials was rather one of sincere and happy confidence that their arrival was thoroughly welcome to the overwhelming mass of the Austrian nation.

Individually the men who govern Germany are as genial and friendly as their counterparts in any other country. How then can one account for the harshness of their regime towards those of whom it disapproves, on political or racial grounds?

I believe the explanation to be that the German character is more insensible to suffering than that of the British people of to-day. This view is naturally challenged

by the Germans themselves. When Herr Himmler asks why he is called in England a "blood-hound," and I answer "Because of the concentration camps," he retorts, "And what about flogging in British prisons?"

It is worth noting, however, that the same criticisms as are now passed on Germany were directed against England in the Victorian age. That was a period when the British were as unpopular with other nations as the Germans are to-day. The same faults were charged against them—overbearing demeanour, aggressiveness, inability to see any point of view but their own. As M. André Tardieu has said:

"It is a dominant fact of historic evolution that differences of age exist between the nations, and affect their destinies. Thus the Italy of Cavour's day, like the Germany of Bismarck's, were of the same age as Elizabethan England or the France of Henri IV, and consequently manifested a similar boldness."

From the Hotel Weinzinger there went to Rome on the morning of Sunday, March 13, one of the shortest diplomatic messages on record. A member of the Führer's staff who had seen it repeated its text to me, adding:

"It is only eight words long, but it will change European history."

The profound effects of that telegram are, indeed, already perceptible. It was as follows:

"Mussolini, dieses werde Ich Ihnen nie vergessen. Hitler."
("I will never forget this.")

That was the Führer's rejoinder to Mussolini's acquiescence in the Anschluss, which had been also briefly conveyed in a wire reading, "I congratulate you on the way you have solved the Austrian problem. I had already warned Schuschnigg. Mussolini."

For, on Friday, March 11, the day on which Schuschnigg was turned out of office, Prince Philip of Hesse, the German

son-in-law of the King of Italy, had been sent by aeroplane from Berlin to Rome.

He was the bearer of a letter signed by Hitler that reached Mussolini at about the same time as M. Blum, the new Popular Front Premier in France, made an unsuccessful appeal to Rome to join with the French Government in common action against the Anschluss.

The Duce summoned a special meeting of the Fascist Grand Council at the Palazzo Venezia for the following day, Saturday, to which he read Herr Hitler's message.

The Führer had written:

Do not interpret my action in Austria otherwise than as an act of legitimate national defence, such as any man of character in my place must have performed. You would not have acted differently if the fate of Italians had been at stake. In an hour which was critical for Italy in the past [he was referring to the Sanctions campaign, in which Germany refused to join] I showed you how steadfast I was. Do not doubt that I shall remain steadfast in the future.

Whatever may be the consequences of coming events, I have traced a definite German frontier with regard to France, and I am now tracing a German frontier equally definite with regard to Italy. That frontier is the Brenner. This decision will never be placed in doubt or attacked at any time.

In response to this, Mussolini told his Council that he had rejected the French appeal for concerted action against Germany, and that he was about to issue the following statement:

The Italian Government have decided, for obvious reasons, not to interfere in any way in Austria's internal politics and in this development of a national movement, the logical outcome of which can be clearly foreseen. . . . The Fascist Grand Council regards the events in Austria as the outcome of a pre-existent state of affairs, and as the free expression of the will of the Austrian people, plainly mani-

fested by the imposing popular demonstrations which have followed them. . . . The Fascist Grand Council have declined a French invitation to take part in concerted action against Germany for the reason that it would be groundless and purposeless, and would merely render the international situation more difficult.

There was now nothing to give Hitler pause in his purpose of annexing Austria. The British and French Governments had, indeed, protested through their Ambassadors in Berlin on the evening of Friday, March 11, and similar representations had been made to Herr von Ribbentrop in person by the Prime Minister and Lord Halifax—for the Foreign Minister was at that moment in London on an official visit, which had been expected to deal with the possibility of the return of some of the German colonies.

To these warnings from the Democratic Powers, however, Germany had returned a curt reply, in the form of a letter signed by Baron von Neurath, the President of the Cabinet Council. This communication, of which a similar version was sent to the French, denied that the British and French Governments had any right to claim the rôle of protectors of Austrian independence.

"Relations between the Reich and Austria can only be regarded as an internal affair of the German people, which is no concern of third Powers," it declared, and concluded with the words: "For this reason the German Government must from the outset reject the protest as inadmissible even though it is only conditional."

There had never, indeed, been more than one Great Power prepared to pass from diplomatic protest to military action in defence of Austrian independence. That Power was Italy, who had checked German support of the Nazi uprising in Austria on July 25, 1934, by moving an army to the Brenner frontier. During the four years following on this action, the British and French Governments had

ended their good relations with Italy by the attempt to defeat her campaign of colonial expansion in East Africa.

The adoption of that policy sealed the fate of Austria.

It was not out of any instinctive sympathy for the Austrian people that the Duce had acted as their champion, subsidized the Heimwehr militia upon which their Government depended for internal protection, and advised and supported Austrian statesmen like Dollfuss and Starhemberg. Austria was, on the contrary, the traditional antagonist of Italy. The only interest the Italians had in her preservation was that of maintaining a barrier between themselves and the formidable force of Germany.

The misguided policy of the Western Democratic Powers had driven Italy to turn for support to those very Germans whom they had hitherto been anxious to keep at a distance. The independence of Austria thus lost its importance for her. The Italian people, indeed, were shocked and alarmed on Saturday, March 12, to find German troops standing upon their frontier within sixty miles, as aeroplanes fly, from the Adriatic and the important industrial centres of the Northern Italian plain. But Mussolini himself had long accepted this sacrifice as the price of German support against the countries which had done their best to ruin him by wrecking his conquest of Abyssinia.

Marshal Goering told me that when Mussolini came to Germany in September, 1937, and paid him a visit at Karinhall, he had laid before him, without saying a word, a map of Europe in which Austria was already coloured as part of Germany.

"That is a little previous, isn't it?" was the Duce's only comment, and Goering had replied, "Well, it represents what the position will be one day, and I am too poor a man to go on buying myself new maps all the time."

The morning of Sunday, March 13, was cold but sunny. Hitler had telephoned to Seyss-Inquart, who had returned to Vienna, to come back to Linz by air with Dr. Glaise-Horstenau and several other of the new Austrian Ministers, for a final conference on the methods of carrying out the Anschluss. During the last few hours of Austria's independence, Dr. Seyss-Inquart, as Chancellor, had been acting as substitute for the President of the Austrian Republic, Dr. Miklas, who had resigned his office the day before.

Dr. Meissner and Dr. Lammers, two of the chiefs of Hitler's staff in his capacity as President of Germany, were busy drafting the final text of the decree. The Führer determined meanwhile to spend the morning on a visit to Leonding, a village about four miles from Linz where he had lived till his father died when he was fourteen years old, and where both his parents lie buried.

I drove out there in advance by a country-road through the pleasant rolling Austrian landscape along which Hitler must often have walked as a boy, barefoot in summer, or trudging through the snow in winter, on his way to school in Linz.

Leonding is a scattered village of no particular attractiveness. Its narrow main street of white houses, standing in small gardens, curves up a gradual slope to the churchyard at the top, on the far side of which, looking out over the low wall across the graves, is a small two-storied building which was Hitler's boyhood home.

It is now occupied by Marie Neiderl, a sempstress, whose work is constantly interrupted by the arrival of Nazi pilgrims to visit what has become a national shrine.

A tall, straight yew-tree, which must have been a sapling when Hitler was there, stands by the front door like a sentinel. Inside, a straight, steep stairway leads up to a landing under the rafters of the high-pitched roof,

and from there a door opens into the low-ceilinged bedroom where the future ruler of Germany first dreamed of the Anschluss as a boy in his early 'teens.

The elementary school in which the Führer learned to read is a similar white-painted building on the other side of the graveyard, facing the cupola-topped tower of the little church. It has been turned into a house for the village midwife.

As one looked at the shabbily dressed but sturdy village boys, with weather-beaten faces and chapped hands, who were jostling for front places among the crowd lining the main street of Leonding, it was not difficult to visualize the Adolf Hitler of forty years ago, and to measure the extraordinary achievement of his career.

These humble villagers were in the truest sense his own people. The oldest among them had known him as a youth, though he had clearly made so little impression on their minds at the time that their actual memories of him were few. I spoke to one old woman who said that she used to keep goats, and that young Adolf had often thrown stones at them. Her tone was still full of resentment, and she seemed to feel only a grudging approval for the preparations being made to welcome her former persecutor.

Herr Hagmuller, a baker, showed some broken beehives formerly belonging to Hitler's father, which he had bought at the sale held after his death. He owned two pictures that had looked down from the walls of Hitler's home upon his childhood. They were primitive coloured prints in the style of the 1880's.

Others of the Führer's schoolfellows took me to see the Gasthaus Witzinger, where his father had died on a January morning in 1903. To-day it was crowded with people taking hot drinks to keep out the cold while they waited, and in the kitchen I was introduced to Frau Witzinger, who, wiping her hands on her apron, gave an account of how Herr Hitler senior met his end. From

its vividness and fluency, I judged she was often called on to tell the story.

"He used to come here every day at ten o'clock in the morning to meet his friends and drink a glass of red wine with them," she said. "That particular morning he happened to be a little early. 'No one here yet?' he called out to me in the kitchen, and he took a newspaper down from the rack to read while he was waiting. A few minutes later, I noticed that he was gulping at a glass of water, and that his hand was trembling. Suddenly he said, 'I don't feel at all well. Go and fetch my wife.'

"I ran up the hill to their house and came back with Frau Hitler. At first we could not see him in the room, and then we found him lying on the floor by the window, as if he had collapsed while trying to open it. I ran to the door and called in two men who happened to be passing." (One of these was pointed out to me on the premises as Frau Witzinger told her tale). "We lifted him on to that horsehair sofa," she went on, "and his wife suggested putting some ice on his chest. But it was too late—he was already dead."

Frau Witzinger had just finished her tale when a burst of cheering from the outskirts of the village emptied the inn with a rush. I got out just in time to see Hitler go by, standing in the front seat of his open car with a set expression that hid the emotion he must have been feeling as he passed slowly along the village street down which he had run so often as a country urchin and to which he now came back as the uncontested arbiter of the destiny of two nations, with more personal power than any other man on earth. His aeroplanes droned round and round in circles overhead. His Generals, Admirals, Ministers and staff followed in the long procession of cars behind him. The little boy who used to pelt the goats in Leonding was master of them all.

He had changed, but Leonding had not. The gates of the churchyard at the top of the hill were unlocked and he went in alone except for one of his adjutants, and his personal photographer, Heinrich Hoffman, who followed him to take a picture as he stood beside the grave lying next to the north wall beneath a tall yew-tree that leans over the earth covering the parents who produced the most extraordinary personality of our times. For some years past this tomb had been a place of pilgrimage for Austrian Nazis, who used secretly to lay upon it flowers and swastika flags, which were promptly removed by the police.

To-day it was smothered beneath enormous wreaths bearing ribbon-streamers with dedications from public bodies of all kinds. A plain wooden cross rose out of the flowers heaped high on a granite plinth bearing a black marble plaque in which, according to Austrian custom, a photograph of Hitler's father was inserted, having beneath it the inscription:

ALOIS HITLER

Retired Imperial Customs Official

And House Owner

Died 3rd January 1903 in his 63rd Year

And of his Wife

KLARA HITLER

Died 21st December 1907 aged 45

Hitler stood there for a moment in silence. Then, taking a large wreath from his adjutant behind him, he placed it on the grave and walked out of the churchyard with his face still wearing the same expressionless mask.

Though conferences were going on upstairs in the Hotel Weininger all that afternoon, the Fuhrer found time to come out on to the road along the Danube bank



HOUSE AT LEONDING WHERE HITLER LIVED TO THE AGE OF 14



Wide World Photos

HITLER ENTERS THE SUDETENLAND

and review a march-past of 3,000 Austrian Nazis belonging to the hitherto secret Storm Trooper and Protection Guard formations. By comparison with the highly-disciplined and well-equipped parades of the corresponding organizations in Germany, this was a pathetic rather than an impressive spectacle. Except for white shirts, there were few uniforms; many of the men looked undernourished, and their attempt to reproduce the stiff, high-swinging German parade-step was of amateur quality. But it was with a glowing religious ardour that they flung up their arms to salute Hitler as they went by, for many of them had suffered imprisonment for their political faith and all had lived a constantly harassed life.

About eight o'clock that night, a member of the Führer's staff brought down from his room a copy of the decree which was to be published in Vienna two hours later announcing the annexation of Austria to Germany.

Little pomp and circumstance surrounded this termination of the existence of a once-mighty State. On a single sheet of paper in a small sitting-room of a provincial Austrian hotel, Hitler had written the closing chapter of her history. It consisted of three brief articles, as follows:

1. Austria is a country of the German Reich.
2. On Sunday, April 10, 1938, a free and secret plebiscite will be held of all German men and women in Austria over the age of 20 as to the reunion of Austria with the German Reich.
3. The issue of the plebiscite will be decided by the simple majority of the votes cast.

Another decree issued at the same time incorporated the Austrian Army and Air Force in the German *Wehrmacht*, and ordered that all ranks should take an oath of allegiance to the Führer.

As he came down the narrow staircase to dinner at about ten o'clock that evening, saluted by all the officers and officials waiting in the hall, Hitler was already the ruler of Austria. He sat in the middle of the long side of a narrow table against the wall in the unpretentious little restaurant, waited on by a grey-haired old man and a chubby *piccolo*. Not that he needed much service, for he ate only baked apples and drank lime-flower tea. At the head of the table was his burly adjutant, Brückner. The Führer had General Brauschitsch, the Head of the Wehrmacht, on his right, and Herr Himmler on his left.

Looking on from the next table at this group of a dozen men, I wondered whether a stranger to the whole situation, who happened to enter and was asked to pick out by personal appearance alone the man who had just changed the composition of Europe, would point to Hitler. In his moments of relaxation, there is nothing aggressive or domineering about his face. He generally wears the contented look of a healthy man who is pleased with his surroundings. He laughs a good deal—though rather sardonically. This evening his alert, defiant eyes were flashing more than usual with the excitement of the day.

I passed a note to Herr Hitler during dinner.

"I have had the privilege of hearing Your Excellency's views at many critical moments during the past few years," I wrote, "but this is an even more memorable occasion, and I should very much like to have a short talk with you about it."

My experience of contacts with the German Führer, including a number of private talks which were not for publication, has left me with the impression that he does not like being interviewed. As a world-master in the art of popular appeal, he feels an instinctive misgiving about the intervention of another individual as an instrument for the expression of his views. When he stands on the

platform before a microphone, addressing audiences of tens of thousands, with many unseen millions more listening-in, his own intuition tells him what effect his words are having. It is impossible for him to be so sure of the reaction that will be produced by statements reproduced the following day in a foreign language.

So thoroughly concentrated in Hitler's brain is the administrative authority of the Third Reich that even those in the closest attendance on him are often in the dark as to what his views and intentions are. Several of the group which had been dining with him therefore gathered round eagerly when Herr Hitler received me in the small sitting-room where he had that day drafted the Anschluss. The table was still littered with the writing-materials of the final conference that had taken place between him and a number of high German and Austrian State officials.

Hitler stood with his arms folded across his light khaki tunic. A challenging smile played on his lips.

"Well, what do you say to all this?" he asked.

"I can't help wondering," I answered, "what effect to-day's developments will have on the Anglo-German conversations that Herr von Ribbentrop has just begun in London."

The Führer's eyes flashed.

"What effect should they have? On our side, none at all, and I hope none on the British side. What harm have we done to the interests of any foreign country by meeting the earnest desire of the overwhelming majority of the Austrians to be joined up with Germany? This is a purely internal German affair. It does not concern other countries in the slightest," he exclaimed, raising his voice and addressing himself rather to his eagerly approving staff than to myself.

"But the British and French Governments have sent a Note of protest," I remarked.

"Protest? What have they got to protest about? These people here are Germans," retorted Herr Hitler, in indignant tones. "There is no more sense in a protest from other countries about what I have done than there would be in a note from the German Government protesting against some development in Britain's relations with Ireland."

"There is one thing," I said, "that the whole world must be asking itself to-night, and that is—will the turn of Czecho-Slovakia come next?"

"*Was jetzt kommt ist eine Verdauungs-Pause,*" replied the Führer emphatically. "The next thing is a pause for digestion. If the Czech Government is wise, it will use that pause to approach me with some acceptable proposals about the Sudeten question. I am a realist, and I am not unreasonable. Look at the ten-year pact of non-aggression that I made with Poland! It is based on recognition of the fact that a country of thirty-three million inhabitants must necessarily have an outlet to the sea. It is hard for us that this should have to be by means of a corridor running through German territory, but we realize what it means for the Poles.

"There is a German minority in Poland, and a Polish minority in Germany. If the two countries were to quarrel, each would oppress the minority belonging to the other. It was far better for Poland and Germany to come to an agreement, and I hope the example of what has happened in Austria will convince all nations of the folly of oppressing national minorities under alien rule."

Herr Hitler paused a moment.

"You had better not make any reference to Czecho-Slovakia in what you write," he said. "In the first place, it is sure to be distorted by the Czech Press and, in the second, it will give the world the impression that my mind is already occupied with Czecho-Slovakia, which is not the case.

"As a matter of fact, even four days ago, I assure you that I had no idea at all that I should be here to-day, or that to-night I should have embodied Austria with the rest of Germany on exactly the same basis as Bavaria or Saxony.

"The reason all this has happened is that Herr Schuschnigg tried to deceive me, and I will not tolerate being betrayed by anyone.

"When I give my hand and word on a matter I stand by it, and expect anyone who enters into an agreement with me to do the same.

"At Berchtesgaden I came to terms with Herr Schuschnigg, under which he was to stop oppressing the Nazi majority in his country. All he had to do was to carry these terms out loyally. Instead, he tried to alter the situation to his own advantage by springing this plebiscite upon his country. When I first heard of his intention, I could not believe it. I sent an emissary by air to Vienna, to find out if the report could possibly be true." (This was Herr Keppler, a financial expert on the Führer's staff.)

"As soon as I learned that it was true, I determined to act at once, and the result is that to-day—the very day that Schuschnigg was going to hold his plebiscite—I have brought about the union of Austria with Germany. This will be submitted to the national vote, and you will see the result. It will be a sweeping majority, as there was in the Saar."

"Well, Your Excellency has altered the map of Europe," I said. "The atlas-makers should be grateful to you for giving them fresh work to do."

"They are more likely to be distressed that I have put all their existing stocks out of date," retorted Herr Hitler sardonically.

Someone in the group around him mentioned Napoleon. "He came here as a conqueror," was Hitler's comment. "Mine is a very different case. This is my home. For

many years I have had the sorrow of seeing the people to whom I belong by birth oppressed and suffering. More than two thousand Austrian National Socialists have lost their lives, many were imprisoned, some of them have even been hanged for their political opinions and their fidelity to the ideals of their German race.

"All this was done by a minority of ten per cent. terrorizing a majority of ninety per cent. I have put an end to all that. And I have done still more. I have prevented the majority from revenging itself on its oppressors. I hope the world will realize that it is a work of peace that I have performed here. If I had not intervened, and Schuschnigg had tried to carry through his plebiscite, there would have been a bloody revolution, and Austria might have become a second Spain in the heart of Europe. Wait a little and watch what I will do for Austria. Come back here in four years and see how the numbers of unemployed have fallen, and how much better off and happier the people are."

The Chancellor talked about his plans for the next few days. He was going to drive from Linz to Vienna.

"Come with me," he said, "and you will see for yourself how the people will receive me."

As I left the Führer's room, the chime of midnight rang out from the church-tower over the old town of Linz, which lay sleeping as soundly as if the day had been entirely insignificant instead of being the last of Austria's eventful history. The hour was very late for sending an important message to *The Daily Mail*, but I was fortunate enough, despite the pressure on all European telephone-lines that night, to get through to London quickly.

It was a tribute to the efficiency of the German Press service that, although this interview was not telephoned to *The Daily Mail* from Linz until nearly one a.m., and had then to be sub-edited, set-up, printed and distributed, Dr. Dietrich, the Chief Government Press Officer, had

received a full version of it, translated into German, from the Embassy in London before eight o'clock in the morning.

So ended an historic day to which Europe may look back in years to come with greater appreciation of its significance than is yet possible. The disappearance of Austria started a new chapter in international affairs. For Germany it was like the rolling away of a stone that opened a gap in the wall of Central Europe through which she could hope to advance into rich fields lying beyond. The people who had so long thought of themselves as German Austrians were now transformed into "Germans of the Ostmark."

CHAPTER VIII

THE FÜHRER'S TRIUMPHAL PROGRESS

BRILLIANT spring sunshine flooded the green Austrian landscape when Hitler's procession set off next morning, Monday, March 14, on its 150-miles drive from Linz to Vienna. The column consisted of close on one hundred open cars, most of them grey Mercédès. Except for a single Army motor-cyclist going on ahead there was no escort. The Führer, wearing a heavy khaki greatcoat, sat, as usual, in the front seat on the right hand of his driver. Behind him were his big adjutant, Herr Brückner, also in Storm Trooper khaki, Herr Schaub, the other adjutant, and the Führer's tall, fair, young valet—both of the latter wearing the black uniform of the S.S. Guards.

I was in the car of Dr. Dietrich, the Government Press Chief, the third behind Hitler's, so that the Führer was constantly in view all the way, about one hundred yards ahead.

Linz gave the procession a tumultuous send-off, the crowd being held back by police and local Storm Troopers with linked arms, and after passing through two or three miles of open country we approached the first village on our route. It stood on a slight slope, towards which the road ran straight for the last mile or so, and we could see the entire population lined up in orderly ranks on either side of the main street, across which stretched a hastily-painted banner with the inscription: "We Greet Our Führer!"

Directly his car slowed down to pass at walking-pace between the ranks of waiting villagers, all this decorous arrangement disappeared. The whole throng on both sides rushed simultaneously forward in a human avalanche, most of them brandishing bouquets at arm's-length. The Mayor, grasping the manuscript of a speech that he had vainly hoped to deliver, was swept away. The firemen, arrayed in their uniforms to lend dignity to the scene, were submerged in a flood of their own neighbours.

In a moment, Hitler's car was the centre of a struggling swarm of hysterically excited people, maintaining a continuous clamour of "Heil! Heil! Heil!" as they strained to touch his hand or to thrust their flowers into his car.

The small detachment of the Hitler *Leibstandarte* which always accompanies him as orderlies and guards—about a dozen men—came close behind us in the column. They leapt out before their drivers had come to a halt, and rushed up to hurl themselves upon the jostling throng, pushing them back so that Hitler's car could once more move forward.

In every one of scores of villages and towns the same scene was repeated. Again and again pretty girls in peasant-dress would dart out from points of vantage on lonely parts of the road so suddenly that Hitler's car avoided them only by pulling up dead with screeching brakes.

I have never seen such obviously genuine enthusiasm, almost religious in its fervour, as was expressed on the brown faces of these Austrian peasants. The eyes and teeth of the young people flashed in smiles of delight. Many of the older ones were crying with emotion. From greyheaded men and women, who had cheered the Emperor Francis Joseph fifty years before, to the young boys and girls born long after their country had been defeated, mutilated and impoverished, came the same frantic never-ending chorus of "Heil! Heil! Heil!"

We could see wild deer galloping away over the hills frightened out of the woods by the tumult of cheering.

Along this road Napoleon had marched in triumph to Vienna as a conqueror. And here was another historic cortège of conquest—this time not of armies but of hearts. As the only foreigner present at the extraordinary display of the relief and gratitude of the people on Hitler's journey through Austria, I found myself marvelling not that the Anschluss should have come about, but that it should have been delayed so long.

There was a military background to this peaceful and joyful procession. At intervals of about five miles we kept on overtaking detachments of the German Army on its way to Vienna. All were motorized, some of them being accompanied by lorries, requisitioned in Munich, or Regensburg, or Nuremberg, bearing the names of their civilian owners, and piled high with military stores. There were many anti-tank batteries, and long columns of armoured cars and tanks, some fitted with wireless. These troops were all halted by the roadside to let the Führer's column pass, and, though the vehicles themselves were dusty after the journey from their bases three or four hundred miles away, the men were all freshly-shaven and looked clean and smart, despite the fact that they had been travelling for the past two days and nights, with only occasional halts, at the top speed that motorized transport can attain.

Their discipline was good, for I noticed several attempts of pretty Austrian girls to start conversations with the soldiers, who smiled in reply, but were not to be distracted from their duty. The village children, however, had clambered all over the tanks and field-guns, and were standing on them to see the Führer as he went by.

At one point, our column of cars was checked by a closed level-crossing, and Herr Hitler had the unusual experience of waiting for one of his own troop-trains to

pass. It was laden with German artillery, carried on open trucks, and the gunners, suddenly recognizing their Führer, seized their grey blankets and waved them vigorously in salute.

In places we came upon bodies of Austrian troops in uniforms very like the German. Sometimes these were drawn up in the streets of the small towns and saluted their new Commander-in-Chief—to whom that very morning they had taken the oath of allegiance—by sinking their colours and playing "*Deutschland über alles.*" Most striking of all was the scene at Enns, where the young cadets from the Officers' School were paraded. They broke their ranks in their excitement and crowded round Hitler's car, greeting him with upraised arms as he stood in their midst above them. It was almost a reconstruction of that famous picture of the Austrian officers grouped about Maria Theresa.

There was not a cloud in the blue sky. On our right, the chain of the snow-covered Alps sparkled in the sun beyond a broad vista of shining green fields and dark fir-woods. The column of cars stretched for over a mile, and all but the first few were smothered in a perpetual cloud of dense white dust. Gritting their teeth, the half-choked members of Hitler's staff swore that it would not be long before Austria had better roads.

German police were in charge of the traffic almost everywhere. Twenty-five thousand of them had been drafted into the country. Their authority seemed to be quite acceptable both to the public and to their Austrian colleagues.

By all these hundreds of thousands of people gathered along the Führer's route, that figure in a brown, belted greatcoat, constantly raising a grey-gloved hand in salute, was lauded like a god. It was a curious contrast amid such deafening Nazi enthusiasm to see, on the walls of the larger places through which we passed, red posters,

still unobliterated, bearing the words "With Schuschnigg for Austria!"

What had become of the old opposition to the Nazi Movement? Passing a factory, whose workmen must surely have been Socialist a few days ago, one saw them lining its wall waving swastika flags. Outside the entrance to a convent at Melk was a group of smiling nuns, giving the Hitler salute. From the cupola-topped towers of the abbey, standing on its high cliff above the Danube, came the deep chime of bells ringing a joy-peal. This surprised even my German companions, but we were told by the local police that Cardinal Innitzer, the Primate of Austria, had ordered all churches in the country to join thus in the national exultation.

After nearly four hours on the road, we reached St. Polten, a town of about twenty-five thousand people. Rather unexpectedly the Führer had decided to stop there for lunch. The narrow street around the principal hotel was packed so tight with people that the column of cars had to push through them like snow-ploughs.

Going upstairs to wash away the dust of the road, I unexpectedly met Herr Hitler on the landing of the main staircase. He paused as he saw me. The roar of enthusiastic greeting from the crowd outside was in our ears, and Hitler's eyes had that shining, rapturous look that comes into them when he is being cheered by great multitudes.

"Have you ever seen anything like this?" he exclaimed. "And, if I had not come, there would have been bloodshed here instead of cheering—tears instead of joy."

As he spoke, a young man in the early twenties, wearing civilian clothes but with a swastika brassard, ran swiftly up the staircase from the throng in the hall below.

"For all this we thank our Führer!" he shouted excitedly, and then, flinging his arms around Herr Hitler, tried to kiss him. The startled Führer resisted

the embrace, and with an embarrassed smile pushed his enthusiastic admirer away.

The incident was only one of many which suggested that he was exposing himself to great personal risk throughout this day of almost uncontrolled popular demonstration. There had been no time to provide organized police protection, and amid the confused crowds constantly swarming round his car an assassin could have found not only opportunity but even immunity. This thought kept on recurring to my mind as we entered the outskirts of Vienna, and drove at a walking-pace through formerly Communist quarters like Hütteldorf.

Here, indeed, the vast crowds on either side were held back by German troops, who were without their rifles and stood with linked arms swaying back and forth under the pressure of the multitude behind them, but every window overlooking the route was packed with people, every roof was lined with onlookers. It seemed fantastic that the Head of a State whose rule has aroused such violent antagonism should be thus exposing himself in a city where so many of his political adversaries had found refuge. Like Mussolini, Hitler feels sufficient confidence in his personal destiny to neglect the danger of violent death.

When we entered that long, straight thoroughfare, the Mariahilferstrasse, which leads directly into the heart of Vienna from the west, the crowd stood hundreds deep, even down the side-streets. The din was simply pandemoniac. Terrified pigeons were flying wildly overhead, distracted by the cheering. A flaming red sunset had spread over the sky behind us, and its light glowed upon the vast masses of deliriously excited faces turned towards Hitler as he advanced in his slow-moving car, standing upright in the midst of a triumph such as no Roman Emperor ever knew.

We passed bands that were visibly playing, but not a

note of their music reached our ears. It was impossible to hear one's own voice trying to shout a remark to the men sitting by one's side. For six miles, which took an hour to cover, this deafening tumult continued through the streets of Vienna. As a display of frenzied enthusiasm it beat anything I have ever seen in Germany. One could have sworn that every Monarchist, Communist and Jew in Austria had become a Nazi overnight. Four years before, the Dollfuss Government had conquered the Viennese Socialists by artillery; to-day, Hitler seemed to have converted them by the mere fact of his arrival in their city.

At the corner where the Mariahilferstrasse meets the Burg Ring, Dr. Seyss-Inquart was waiting, dressed in black with a top hat, and holding a bouquet of flowers. He got into the Führer's car, and a fleet of light tanks now joined the column and led the way to the Hotel Imperial, where Hitler was to stay.

The recollection broke upon my mind that the last procession in which I had taken part in these same streets had been the funeral of Dr. Dollfuss. How fantastic then a prophecy of the extraordinary scenes I was now witnessing would have appeared! And it was another odd reflection that perhaps among these exulting millions were those Viennese bricklayers who, thirty years before, had worked side by side with Adolf Hitler, and were now seeing him pass, surrounded with ecstatic adulation, along the identical thoroughfares where once, as an out-of-work youth, he had shovelled snow.

The Hotel Imperial, on the Ring, has a pillared portico, of which the top forms a broad balcony. Hitler at once stepped out on it and harangued the tight-packed sea of heads that stretched far out of sight in either direction along the broad boulevard.

"Germany, as it stands to-day," he shouted, "shall never be divided or destroyed. No threats, no stress, no

need and no force can break this oath. This I declare in the name of seventy-five million German men and women, from Königsberg to Cologne and from Hamburg to Vienna!"

His hotel was once the town palace of a great Austrian family. Its broad marble hall looked, but for the absence of women, as if a big political reception were going on. Except for Marshal Goering, left in charge of Germany, all the leading members of the Government were there. Herr von Ribbentrop had flown straight from London to report to the Führer the effect of his action upon the British Cabinet.

One might have expected that the Foreign Minister would have found it rather awkward to be in London actually engaged in negotiations with the British Foreign Office at the moment when his Government sprang a surprise like the Anschluss. From the talk I had with him, however, I did not gather that the situation had proved at all unpleasant. He had been at a public dinner with the chief British Ministers when the first news of Schuschnigg's abdication came. He seemed to have welcomed the opportunity to give them a personal exposition of German motives. He had left London still convinced that Mr. Chamberlain genuinely wanted an understanding with Germany.

"Our position," said Herr von Ribbentrop, "is after all a simple one. There are three things which Germany has taken as her aims and which she is determined to attain. They are Austria, the union of the Sudetens with the Reich, and the recovery of our colonies. These are the limit of German aspirations. If we are not opposed in carrying them out there will be no trouble. The only possibility of friction arises from Britain's habit of mixing herself up in matters with which she has no direct concern."

It was in no doubt the same strain that the Foreign Minister had spoken to Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax two days before in London. Lack of frankness is certainly not a reproach that can be levelled against the Nazi regime.

In mid-March they were already announcing the next step in their programme, and if six months later British Ministers were unprepared for the Sudeten crisis, they could only blame themselves.

Regular use of the aeroplane, of which every important Reichsminister has one always at his disposition, with seating for a dozen people, enables the principal members of the German Government to arrive anywhere with the maximum of swiftness at any time of the day or night. They are so accustomed to receive sudden summonses to Berchtesgaden that they think nothing of starting off after dark on a flight that may last till midnight, for it is in the small hours that the Führer is at his best for political discussions.

Most of the best-known figures in the Reich had thus gathered from all parts of Germany in the hall of the Imperial Hotel—Herr Hess, the Führer's Deputy, with his tall, athletic figure and fixed, impersonal smile; Dr. Goebbels, with alert, mocking eyes; Dr. Schacht in his tall, old-fashioned white double-collar, summoned to handle the question of amalgamating the Austrian and German currencies; and Herr Himmler, who had been with the Führer on the drive from Linz. Herr von Papen, himself formerly German Chancellor, and, until to-day, German Minister in Vienna, was also there to pay his respects to his all-powerful chief.

Herr Hitler had retired to the lofty suite of apartments which stands on the first floor of the hotel at the head of the monumental staircase. There, over a dinner-table to which he summoned the leading Ministers and Party officials who had arrived in Vienna, he gave a dissertation on the parallel between himself and Napoleon.

"Napoleon conquered most of Europe," he said, "because his armies represented the ideas of the French Revolution. It was not so much his military skill as the appeal of the cause he represented that gave him victory.

Remember how he first defeated the Prussians, and then, within a few years, was himself overcome by the same people because, in the meantime, the Prussians had acquired the conception of nationality.

"In the same way, we have won Austria, not by force but because we represent a political conception that is irresistible. Great is the power of ideas. They will work for us in the future as they have in the past. Now comes a lull during which we shall reorganize Austria, but afterwards we shall go forward again in the strength of the same ideas which have given this country into our hands."

Outside, the exultant cheering of the crowds went on uninterruptedly. I asked one of the chiefs of the German Secret Police whether there had been counter-demonstrations anywhere in the city away from our line of route. He assured me that no disturbance of any kind had occurred. He added, however, that a large number of people known to be hostile to Nazi ideals were already under arrest. Among these were most of the officials of the Schuschnigg Government. Several Ministers had managed to escape to Czecho-Slovakia. Known Communist leaders, and a number of Jews, including the banker Baron Louis de Rothschild, were also in custody, and so were the principal members of the Austrian Monarchist Movement.

"It is not so much that we have definite charges against these people," he told me, "but we have seized all the Austrian Government archives, and we shall probably find material there that will incriminate some of them. We intend to keep them at our disposition so that we can interrogate or punish them if we want to."

This police official gave me a description, not without a certain dramatic interest, of the way in which an end had been put to that Legitimist campaign by which the Habsburgs had hoped to recover the Austrian

dominions that they had ruled for nearly six centuries and a half.

Eight S.S. Guards, he said, had gone to the flat of Baron Wiesner, the Monarchist leader. They had arrested him, locked up all his papers and left a guard to preserve them for future examination. Meanwhile, the Archduke Otto himself was staying under an assumed name in a small hotel of the Boulevard Raspail in Paris.

The story of the fluctuations of the Monarchist cause in Austria is a real romance of our times which yet remains to be written. Two years before the Anschluss destroyed all hope of a Habsburg restoration, it is said that Dr. Schuschnigg instructed Prince Starhemberg to stop in Paris on his way back from King George's funeral, and discuss with Archduke Otto possible conditions for his return. From this Starhemberg is supposed to have been dissuaded by Titulescu, the Rumanian Foreign Minister, acting on behalf of the Little Entente, who heard of Schuschnigg's scheme and got hold of the Vice-Chancellor in Paris.

For years the Habsburg fortunes were in constant ebb and flow. Only a few weeks in advance of the Anschluss, they had had a highly favourable augury in the form of the return of the family properties in Austria.

Accompanied by a senior police officer, I set out for a drive through the city. It had now been dark for an hour or two, and every street was blocked by marching processions of demonstrators. The car, driven by a German policeman, was one that had been commandeered that day from its Jewish owner, and the driver had no idea of the geography of Vienna, so that we were constantly doubling on our tracks, headed off everywhere by marching columns. My companion began to get impatient, and finally conscripted two Viennese policemen on point duty to accompany us and act as guides. When the next procession crossed our path, he urged these police officers to get out and hold

it up. They attempted to do so with typical Austrian politeness, but the singing, excited marchers paid no attention to their mild expostulations. My German companion grew impatient.

"Why don't you shout at them? Use your authority! Order them to halt!" he roared at his apologetic and self-conscious Austrian subordinates.

This temperamental difference between Germans and Austrians began to grow more conspicuous as the first enthusiasm of the Anschluss died down. During the next day or two I noticed an increasing tendency on the part of the Germans to criticize Austrian "*Schlappeit*," or softness. This led to embarrassing moments when it suddenly dawned upon them that though the people to whom they were talking might all be wearing the same uniform as themselves, some of them were Austrians who had only assumed that dress a day or two before.

On the morning of Tuesday, March 15, Hitler drove at the head of his usual procession to the Heldenplatz, a wide space facing the lofty new wing of the Hofburg, which had been the palace of the Habsburgs.

From the broad balcony in its semi-circular front, he looked down over the expanse of gardens below, entirely filled with a vast mosaic of 100,000 pink upturned faces shining in the sun, from whose midst rose the mammoth statue of Austria's great eighteenth-century general, Prince Eugene, sitting on a rearing bronze charger, with a flowing perruque and three-cornered hat.

Beyond this wildly cheering and waving human flood, one saw the classical portico and pediment of the former Austrian Parliament, from whose gallery, thirty years before, Hitler had had his first glimpse of political institutions, and where he had conceived his bitter contempt for democratic methods of government. To-day, that same building was copiously hung with the swastika flag of his

own design, which has now become one of the best-known and most formidable emblems in the world.

The memory of those hard early times in Vienna must have been in his mind for his voice faltered and almost broke as he shouted, at the climax of his speech:

"I have restored my homeland to the German Reich!"

Leaving the wide balcony when his oration was over, he paused for a moment beside me on the marble staircase within the building. "Well, you have seen it for yourself. *Ist das eine Vergewaltigung?*" he asked in a challenging voice.

He was referring to the headline "The Rape of Austria" with which, as his Press officer, Dr. Dietrich, had informed him, *The Times* that morning had headed its principal news-page.

The grandiose reception which Vienna was giving him had certainly surpassed his highest expectations. I could see that Herr Hitler was very near to tears. He drew his handkerchief from his sleeve and pressed it to his lips. His emotion seemed to choke him for a moment. Then he pulled himself together again and strode on down the staircase, followed by the hurrying throng of officials who formed his train.

That same afternoon, the Führer held a review of forty thousand German and Austrian troops on the Ringstrasse opposite the Burgtor, a triumphal arch, built in Metternich's day, which leads to the Hofburg precincts. It was exactly 90 years to the day since that arch had looked down upon the start of the Revolution of 1848.

Most of the military taking part on this occasion had travelled hundreds of miles by forced motor-marches during the previous three days. They were quartered in scattered school-buildings, skating-rinks and cinemas, under circumstances very inconvenient for the organization of a ceremonial parade. One could not but be impressed, therefore, by the spick-and-span condition and perfect

discipline and timing that marked their march-past. It was led by General von Bock, the German officer who had just been appointed to command the Austrian Army, henceforth to be known as the German Eighth Army.

Austrian motorized troops and a battery of motor-drawn four-inch howitzers opened the parade. Then came the Second Armoured Division, one of the crack corps of the whole German Army. This consisted of light armoured cars for scouting, riflemen on motor-bicycles, others in motor-lorries, detachments of pioneers, anti-tank batteries, tractor-drawn field-artillery and a battery of huge nine-inch guns whose weight shook the ground. More Austrian infantry followed, including the historic *Deutschmeister* Regiment, carrying their black, white and gold Austrian colours for the last time; then German infantry; many tanks—from almost toy size, with two machine-guns, to five-ton monsters, of which there were a hundred; the famous German anti-aircraft guns known as "Flak" batteries, in their camouflage of green and brown; Austrian cavalry distinguishable by sheepskin-lined dolmans hanging from their shoulders, and Austrian horse-artillery; while the end of the march was brought up by detachments of German police and of the *Leibstandarte*, Hitler's picked bodyguard of young giants, twelve abreast, stamping the dust out of the Vienna paving-stones with their vigorous parade-step.

While this review was going on, two hundred German twin-engined bombers and fighting machines flew by overhead, many of them having come 250 miles from their bases to return there without landing after it was over.

The statement has frequently been made that the motorized forces of the Reich developed many defects during their swift advance into Austria. I myself saw no evidence of these breakdowns, but my friend and colleague, M. Charles d'Ydewalle, himself a Belgian reserve cavalry officer, has put it on record that about ten per cent. of

the armoured cars developed mechanical defects, and that he saw heavy guns held up for a whole day, blocking the streets on the outskirts of Vienna while their crews worked from dawn to dark to repair the tractors. That some flaws in the German military machine may have developed is quite possible, but the excellent appearance of the troops that paraded in Vienna is proof that the general level of efficiency was high.

On the human side, at any rate, the discipline, smartness and endurance of the Wehrmacht came with credit through a severe test of rapid movement. Despite great fatigue and difficult conditions, the men continued to be as well turned-out as in their barracks at home. Amid every temptation to join in the general rejoicing around them, they maintained the strictest standards of military behaviour.

"The Terror in Austria" was a headline which soon began to appear in newspapers all over the world, but however much the political persecution set on foot in Austria may be disapproved, it is only fair to point out that the other side began it. For several years the Austrian Nazis had been subjected to very severe repression by the Schuschnigg Government. When I mentioned to Marshal Goering a fortnight after the Anschluss the bad impression that was being made in England by the arrests that were going on in Vienna, he said that it was inevitable that a revolution should be followed by reprisals, and that it would require superhuman forbearance on the part of the National Socialists of Austria to abstain from getting some of their own back.

Few foreign visitors to that country during the Schuschnigg regime realized how heavily its hand rested on political opponents. I should not have believed it myself if I had not seen the actual places where they were imprisoned.

Behind the attractive façade of Austrian daily life,

thousands of men were kept in prison under conditions that had changed little since the Middle Ages. After the Anschluss I was shown the Rathaus gaol in Linz, one of the main centres of the Nazi movement, where hundreds of the adherents of this party had been confined for six months at a time, locked up ten together in cells nine feet broad and twelve feet long, with a sheet of iron outside the barred window that cut off practically all the light and admitted very little air.

A sloping wooden shelf, stretching the whole width of the cell, was its only furniture. Five prisoners slept on this, and the other five beneath it. In summer, they sweated and panted in an atmosphere like that of an open sewer, for the only sanitary convenience was a tin can in a corner. In winter, they huddled together, cramped and freezing. At all times of the year, these dark dungeons are infested with lice and bugs.

Nor was that all the suffering they had to endure. There were actually torture-chambers in these peaceful, happy-looking Austrian villages. In an outhouse of the Police Prison at Linz, I was shown iron rings in the wall to which the men then standing by my side had been tied while they were beaten with rubber truncheons.

In Linz, there were never less than one hundred Nazis in gaol at any given time. No indulgence was shown to these political prisoners. They were compelled to share cells with criminals of the lowest kind. Young girls who had joined the secret Austrian branch of the "League of German Maidens" were shut up with street prostitutes, and boys who had given each other the Nazi salute were locked up in the grim cells of the Rathaus prison for four or five months. Twenty-two of the party leaders in Linz who were confined together attempted a hunger strike, in retaliation for which they were supplied only with soapy water to drink.

A former Oberbuergermeister, accused of Nazi

sympathies, was marched through the streets in handcuffs, and sentenced to seven weeks' solitary confinement. Another political prisoner, who had now become Mayor of the town, told me that when his face swelled up with toothache he was taken in chains to the police dentist, who treated him with such brutality that one of the warders was sick, while the dentist's assistant broke into tears and secretly pushed cigarettes into the prisoner's pocket. At the present time there is hardly a Mayor or Police President in Austria who has not had personal experience of prison life.

The concentration camp of Woellersdorf was less severe than the ordinary prisons, though it was infested with vermin, especially bed-bugs. The men confined there were employed at such labour as loading coal or in building operations. They were interned for indefinite periods at the pleasure of the Government. Herr Kaltenbrunner, who, immediately after the Anschluss, was appointed Head of the Austrian S.S., and was given charge of purging the country of its anti-Nazi elements, with the rank of Secretary of State, told me that he himself in Woellersdorf was compelled daily to move a heap of human excrement from one side of the prison-yard to the other and back again with his bare hands.

"On one occasion, the guards deliberately fired on their prisoners for fun," he said. "There was a case of a seventy-four-years old mother being arrested in order to force her son to confess to his secret Nazi activities. She died in prison, and the young man committed suicide. If you knew how the Austrian Nazis were treated under the Schuschnigg regime, you would realize that it is natural that we should deal sternly with those who, until so short a time ago, were persecuting us."

The Woellersdorf concentration-camp served as a sort of university of the Austrian Nazi movement, where men from different parts of the country learnt to know each other. Certainly those who were interned there have in

most cases been amply rewarded for their discomfort since the Anschluss came about.

There can seldom have been an odder gaol-delivery in history. The magistrates, chief constables and others who had locked up the Nazi agitators were thrust into the cells in their place. The new Police President of Vienna, Dr. Josef Fitzthum, took me round the two principal prisons there, the cells of which were filled with high officials of the former regime. He himself had served a long term in one of them, and the story he told me of his escape was even more romantic than Casanova's flight from the "Leads" in Venice.

"My only hope of breaking out lay in first getting into hospital," said Dr. Fitzthum. "My friends outside managed to smuggle some diphtheria bacilli through to me. I infected myself with these, and developed a severe attack of the disease. This led to my being removed to the prison hospital, where the Nazi party had friends among the staff. These Nazi-minded doctors and nurses set themselves to weave a rope out of the lint supplied for bandages. It took them a long time, for otherwise the increased consumption of lint might have been noticed.

"At last the day came when the rope and the outside preparations for my escape were alike ready. There was a store-room opening off the hospital lavatory where soiled linen was kept. Among that linen they kept the rope, for there was a small window there, looking out on to a little courtyard thirty feet below. One night, I got permission to go to the lavatory, found the rope, threw it out of the window, climbed down it, was hidden in a waiting motor-car and so got out of the prison.

"For a week I stayed in Vienna, sleeping each night in a different house or flat belonging to some secret Nazi supporter. I did not know their names, and they knew nothing about me except that I was a Nazi who had escaped from prison. If they had been caught sheltering

me, they would have got at least two years' imprisonment, but they kept me hidden until a wine-merchant, who was a member of our party, had a consignment of barrels ready to send over the frontier into Germany. One of these had a false bottom, beneath which I was curled up. It was a nightmare-like journey, confined in a narrow, almost airless space and bumping along in the lorry. But at length I got over the frontier.

"Some time later, I came back of my own accord to carry on work for the Nazi cause. Someone denounced me to the police, and I was given two years' solitary confinement, from which I was released only the other day, when the German troops marched in."

For saying "Heil Hitler!" to a fellow-prisoner in the exercise yard, Dr. Fitzthum was once shut up for five days in a dark dungeon underground, and at one period during his imprisonment he lost four stone in weight by a hunger-strike.

The Police President was anxious to show me the prisoners in their cells. It is unpleasant to look on people in captivity, especially when they are political offenders whose only crime is to have espoused an unsuccessful cause, but I yielded to insistent invitations at least to peer through the little bull's-eye windows in the cell-doors. On such occasions one realizes how fortunate it is that we do not take our politics in Britain with the same morbid earnestness as in Central Europe. Through these spy-holes I saw sitting on the edge of plank-beds, sometimes with their heads buried in their hands, men who, less than a month before, had been in comfortable circumstances and good public repute. The only special treatment allowed to prisoners of this class was that of having a cell to themselves.

I looked in upon General Vaugoin, the man who had built up the Austrian Army, first secretly, and then officially, since national military service had been resumed in 1936.

I caught a glimpse too of Baron Wiesner, the leading Austrian Monarchist, whom I had visited several times when he was still convinced that he would one day see Otto crowned as Emperor in Vienna. Dr. Schmitz, the Lord Mayor of Vienna, was also in this gaol, charged with having issued arms to Communists just before the Germans came in. At another cell-door, my guide was specially eager for me to see the inmate face to face, for he was the hangman who had executed Planetta and Holzweber, the two men sentenced to death for the murder of Dr. Dollfuss, together with six other Nazis during that year, 1934, and two more recently.

This man, Lang, was a pensioned policeman of respectable appearance, with a small grey moustache, and looked like a rather seedy diplomat. Standing at attention, he answered the Police President's questions in a depressed manner and a quiet, apologetic voice. He said that he had become prison-executioner because that function was hereditary in his family. Both his father and uncle had been hangmen before him. When asked why he had not refused to hang political prisoners, he replied that he had no choice, and was obliged to do what he was told. He used to be in attendance at the prison whenever court-martial were taking place as, according to Austrian law, the sentence has to be carried out immediately.

Dr. Fitzthum had been in this main Vienna gaol himself at the time of the execution of Planetta and Holzweber. He assured me that there were a thousand Nazis in the prison at that time, and that when they heard from their warders that Planetta and Holzweber had been sentenced they all broke out into a storm of hooting. To avoid further disturbances, the bell after the execution was tolled elsewhere.

I was taken to see the gloomy, narrow, triangular court, twenty-five yards long, with a tall smokestack at its broad end, where the death sentences had been carried out. The scaffold consists of a post about eight inches square

and ten feet high, slotted into a hole in the ground which is otherwise closed by an iron lid.

On to this yard I had looked down from above on that afternoon of July 31, 1934, when the two men whom I had seen sentenced to death were executed. I had been told at the time by a warder who was present that they had died with the words "Heil Hitler!" on their lips, and that from the barred windows of the prison-hospital above, their cry had been echoed by the voice of a woman.

A full account of the execution was now given to me by the chief warder, who said that Holzweber's actual words had been:

"I die for Germany. Heil Hitler!" and that the woman's voice, coming from the second floor above, had replied, "Heil Hitler! Keep your heart up! God will take care of you!"

This official said that he believed that he knew who the female Nazi sympathizer was, but that he had kept the information to himself.

A guard of fourteen police, together with the Governor and doctor of the gaol, had been present at the execution. Two wooden steps were placed at the foot of the post, from which hung a short rope noose fastened to a staple in the top of the post. The prisoner mounted these steps; the noose was put round his head, and the two assistant executioners kicked away the steps and pulled on his shoulders.

A sinister detail of this execution, related to me was that after Holzweber's body had been taken down from the gallows and laid on the bier, it suddenly began to twist in a post-mortem convulsion, horrifying one of the policemen so much that he cried out to the executioner, "Look at your work!"

A whitewashed room opened off the gallows-yard, where the bodies were laid on sloping biers of sheet-iron. A scrubby holy-water brush and censer stood on a table, and leaning against the wall was the actual gallows-post at which all these men had died. I noticed that it bore a

grim inscription, consisting of the dates and hours of the ten executions in which it had been employed, together with the signature of the hangman, Lang, all written in pencil in his own hand. This gallows-post is to be kept as one of the hallowed relics of the Nazi Party. Most of the men whose names appeared on it were condemned for the offence of being found with explosives in their possession.

The same warders who, a week or two before, had been turning their keys on Dr. Fitzthum, the new Police President, were now obsequiously saluting him, sometimes with obvious uneasiness, for this was his first visit to his former place of imprisonment. One or two of them he accused of abusing their authority, and remarked, "I shall look into your case," in an ominous tone that left them pale. One green-uniformed jailer he slapped heartily on the back with the exclamation, "Fine fellow this! On my birthday, he came in the middle of the night to the cell where I had been for six months in solitary confinement, gave the Hitler salute and brought me a bottle of schnapps."

Not finding the prison governor in his office, the ex-prisoner-Police-President sent to say that he wished to speak to him in half an hour's time. Seldom have I seen a look of greater despair on a man's face than he wore when he appeared. He evidently expected to be thrust immediately into one of his own cells. Every limb trembled violently and his eyes filled with tears when his new Nazi chief, taking him by the hand, said:

"I only sent for you to thank you for the honourable and kindly way in which you did your duty as Governor when I was a prisoner here."

The principal contractor of the prison was one of those behind the bars. He, like most of the other Government purveyors, was a Jew, and was alleged by his former *pensionnaire* to have supplied bad meat, and beans containing no fat. One courtyard was entirely filled with shabbily-dressed Jews, shambling round at exercise. They were

awaiting trial on charges of attempting to smuggle money out of Austria.

In the first three weeks after the Anschluss, according to an official return shown to me in the Police President's office, 3,789 people had been arrested in Vienna, of whom 1,139 had been released. During that period, the same record—which was produced from a file at my request, and had certainly not been prepared for my edification—registered the killing of only four people in the capital. Two of these were Monarchists, shot by police on the ground that they resisted arrest, and the other two had been killed by bands of Austrian Nazis.

It is, indeed, surprising that an operation of such magnitude as the Anschluss should have been carried through at so small a cost of life. On the German side one of the 300 aeroplanes sent to fly over Austria had crashed, entailing seven deaths, and one military lorry had been wrecked, with eight soldiers killed.

That there was a good deal of looting in Vienna during the upheaval is beyond doubt. Criminals had simply put on Nazi badges and plundered under pretext of making official confiscations. It was an exaggeration, however, to describe these conditions, in the words used by one English newspaper, as an orgy of "bestiality and brute force."

I heard of cases of Jews being obliged to go down on their knees and scrub out the Schuschnigg Party crosses that had been painted on the pavements. This was a repetition of the methods employed by the Schuschnigg regime, which had compelled Nazis to remove the swastika emblem in the same way. It is also true that Jews were indiscriminately conscripted to clean out barracks and wash down motor-cars, and that their shops and businesses were frequently raided by the Aryan "commissars" appointed to take charge of them. Yet going about freely in Vienna at a time when that city was represented in Britain and America as being in a turmoil of persecution, I came across

no signs of such a condition, though I am prepared to believe that many cases of brutality occurred.

One of the grimmest consequences of the Anschluss was the feeling of helpless terror which it inspired in the Jewish population of Austria. It was this rather than actual physical outrages that produced the long series of suicides, estimated by a Jewish writer as between 1,500 and 2,000, which took place before the end of April, 1938. I was told at the time that the suicide rate in Vienna immediately after the Anschluss rose from thirty to sixty a day.

"The difference is that the people putting an end to themselves are no longer starving Christians but scared Jews," said Nazi officials.

These suicides were not solely Jewish. One of the strangest of them was that of Major Emil Fey, a former Vice-Chancellor of the Austrian Government, whom Dr. Schuschnigg had dropped because he was suspected of complicity with the Nazis.

The story of Fey's death is bound up with that of the murder of Dollfuss and the execution of Planetta and Holzweber.

When the band of armed Nazis seized the Chancellery in the Ballhausplatz on the morning of July 25, 1934, Major Fey, then Minister of War, was the only other member of the Government in the building besides Chancellor Dollfuss himself.

It was he who came out on to the balcony and parleyed with the troops and police whom the rest of the Austrian Government had sent to recapture the Chancellery by force. He afterwards promised the Nazi insurgents a safe conduct to the frontier.

The report was widely circulated, soon after this putsch, that Fey's presence in the Chancellery was not accidental, but that he had secretly been in league with the rebels, and was to have become a member of the new Nazi Government if the rising had succeeded. My friend

and colleague Nypels, of the *Amsterdamsche Courant*, who was outside the building during the putsch, heard one of the police, who had been allowed inside to convey a message from the Government, telephoning his report to the Police Presidency.

"The rebels have declared Rintelen Chancellor and Fey Vice-Chancellor," he said.

I myself heard Fey give evidence before the court-martial which condemned Planetta and Holzweber to death. He was closely questioned as to how he had come to promise the rebels a safe conduct to the frontier. His explanation was that he did not then know that they had killed the Chancellor.

Fey was an impressive though rather sinister figure, with a long, lean, pale face, in which the left eye was permanently blackened by some war-injury. His record as a soldier was of the greatest gallantry, and he wore the Maria Theresa Cross, which in the old Austro-Hungarian army was given only for quite exceptional feats of courage.

Since his retirement from the Government in October, 1935, Fey had been solaced with the post of President of the Danubian State Navigation Company.

There always seemed to be some mystery about his life. Between the unsuccessful Dollfuss putsch and the Anschluss several attempts were made to assassinate him, and a curious story was published in a book called *Who Killed Dollfuss?* by a Jewish and Socialist Austrian lawyer, Dr. Fritz Kreisler, who had been concerned in some minor capacity with the trial of Planetta and Holzweber.

This book alleged that when a post-mortem was held on Dollfuss's body, two bullets of different calibre were found in the corpse. Dr. Kreisler advanced the theory that it was Fey who actually killed Dollfuss, after he had been wounded, without danger to his life, by the shot from Planetta's pistol.

The reason suggested by Kreisler for this crime was

that Fey had been secretly in league with the Nazi rebels who had seized the Chancellery, and that he knew that Dollfuss, if he survived, would denounce him as a traitor.

The book *Who Killed Dollfuss?* was suppressed in Austria, and its author left the country, going to live in Prague. There, curiously enough, on the very same day that Fey died in Vienna, Kreisler committed suicide by jumping out of the window of his fifth-floor flat. He was to have been married almost immediately and the reason that led him to take his life was never established.

Unwilling though one would be to traduce a dead man, it cannot be denied that the part played by Fey during the Dollfuss putsch and the manner of his death four years later are capable of becoming another historical mystery, like the Mayerling affair.

One of the highest authorities in Germany told me some weeks later that if Fey had lived he would have been exposed as a former secret adherent of the Nazi cause who had betrayed it. This revelation would have been made, I was told, in the course of a re-trial of the case of Planetta and Holzweber, which the Nazi Government then intended to organize.

I was with Ralph Izzard, then the Vienna correspondent of *The Daily Mail*, at about 10.30 in the morning when the news reached us that Major Fey, his wife and eighteen-year-old son had all been found dead in their flat, and that it was supposed the major had shot himself after killing them.

I went immediately to see Herr Himmler, the Minister in charge of the German Police at his headquarters at the Hotel Metropole, while Izzard left at once for the flat where the bodies had been found.

"Why did Fey commit suicide? Was he going to be arrested?" I asked Herr Himmler.

"I know nothing about the case," was the Police Minister's reply. "What is your explanation of the Fey

suicide?" he said, turning to Herr Heydrich, his second in command, who is head of the Secret Police.

"Fey was a Monarchist," answered Herr Heydrich. "In my opinion, being an Austrian officer, he felt he could not honourably survive the final collapse of the Monarchist movement."

Such was the "official version" of the Fey mystery, as it was proved to be by the inquiries of my friend Izzard, who was the first on the spot after the arrival of the police.

From one of the two maids in the Fey household, and from the porter of the block of flats, he learned that, on the previous afternoon, Major Fey had taken his Alsatian dog for a walk, and seemed in good spirits when he returned. That evening, there had been a family dinner-party in the flat, at which Major Fey and his wife were joined not only by his sister, Frau Wulften, but by his son who had returned home early in the evening from the military college at Wienerneustadt, wearing his cadet's uniform. There was also another man there, whose identity has remained unknown.

The dinner-party seemed quite a cheerful one. The maids went to bed at 10.30, and heard nothing throughout the night. All the guests with the exception of the unknown man left at midnight, and were let out by the porter. He was awakened again at 3.0 a.m. to open the front door for the man who had stayed behind, and he noticed nothing unusual about his manner.

At seven in the morning, one of the maidservants, entering Major Fey's workroom, found him stretched on the floor by his desk, fully dressed, with a revolver by his side. She ran to call his wife, only to find her also lying dead in her night-clothes. From there the girl rushed into the son's room, but he too lay as if he had been shot when asleep.

Two letters were found on Fey's desk, one addressed to the police and one to a personal friend. Both were

confiscated by the detectives, and their contents have never been made known.

The most probable explanation of the grim end to Major Fey's eventful career was that the friend who stayed behind when the dinner-party broke up had warned him, after the wife and son had gone to bed, of his impending arrest for the purpose of being used as a witness at the revision of the trial of Planetta and Holzweber, and for investigation of the part he had played in the Dollfuss putsch.

CHAPTER IX

AUSTRIA AFTER THE ANSCHLUSS

MOST of the month following upon the Anschluss was taken up in Germany and Austria with intensive propaganda for the plebiscite fixed for April 10.

It may seem strange that a Government with such avowed contempt for democratic methods should trouble to hold a referendum on a step which, even if it were unpopular, could scarcely be cancelled.

But though the Nazis rate leadership far above the ballot-box as the governing element in the State, they know that mammoth demonstrations of any kind automatically impress the human mind. Fifty Storm Troopers marching along the street are so common a sight in Germany that no one turns his head to look at them, but 500,000 Storm Troopers, parading through the streets of Nuremberg, provide the climax of the great Annual Party Congress. A gigantic vote for the Government has its effect not only on the German people but on the outside world as well. It also frees the administration from the charge of denying opportunities for the expression of political convictions.

Though the result of the plebiscite was a foregone conclusion, it did not necessarily give a false picture of the sentiments of the Germans and Austrians. It is difficult for the British, who have never had to experience a long period of national humiliation, to realize how the Anschluss stirred the hearts of the Germans. To the people of the Reich, it came as the first clear assertion outside their own frontiers of their new international standing. After twenty

years, during most of which they had been sufferers and suppliants, they took pride in seeing their Government impose its will in defiance of Germany's former conquerors, brushing aside their protests in contemptuous terms.

The Austrians, for their part, had so long been depressed and discouraged that in their view any change must be for the better. Some doubtless regretted that the heavy hand of Nazi repression would now control a country of such long easy-going and liberal traditions, and that the Austrian Jews were doomed to become either victims or fugitives. But they were careful to conceal such sentiments, and the majority of both nations felt strong satisfaction in the amalgamation of the two Germanic stocks, combined with full confidence that it would prove to the benefit of both.

When Herr Hitler arrived in Vienna on April 9 to wind up a tour of oratory that had taken him all over Germany, he delivered the most eloquent and interesting speech of the many I have heard him make. It was an analysis of his own career, tracing the steps by which he rose from obscurity to the leadership of the Reich, then achieved its restoration as a Great Power, and finally fulfilled his boyhood ambition to unite the land of his birth with the country of his adoption.

He stood on a high pulpit, raised at one end of the long and lofty hall of the North-West Railway Station, which had been transformed by a white and gold awning overhead stretching its whole length, and by draperies along its walls.

As a young man, said Hitler, he had had no concern with politics. His sole ambition then was to be an architect. For four years he had remained a nameless soldier. He had never tried to become a politician or a journalist. He had never made a speech. Those were the days when Germany was being steadily ruined. The men then in power bore the responsibility for her downfall.

And it had been the sight of the havoc which they wrought that had decided him to take up politics.

"As I lay half-blinded in hospital, I realized that those who had wrecked Germany could never restore her. Seeing my country ruined and its people divided, I made for the first time the resolve to *speak*.

"It was clear to me that, if the cleft between bourgeoisie and proletariat were not healed, Germany would be wrecked. Each of these factions hoped for foreign help. The bourgeoisie looked towards Geneva; the proletariat towards Moscow.

"And even these divisions were endlessly sub-divided. There were forty-seven political parties in Germany.

"I saw that no party could unite Germany; that her salvation could not come from Monarchy or Republic, from any Church or group, from bourgeoisie or proletariat. I studied all their programmes and records.

"Germany did not fall into my lap like ripe fruit. I worked bitterly hard for fifteen years. You cannot deny that I worked harder than all your earlier leaders," proclaimed Hitler fiercely. "For years I had no single day's rest. I used to speak every day that I was not prevented by hoarseness. My foreign critics sometimes say my success is based on terror. I could impose no terror then. It was my antagonists who had all the power.

"I never found a loyal adversary," he interjected bitterly. "They never said 'Give him a chance,' but only 'Lock him up!' or 'Kill him!'

"I hated to use force against my fellow-Germans, and I only did so when force was used against me. Then, however, I employed it with vigour, for I had been a soldier.

"I know that I have critics and detractors, but we can neglect them. Our critics are growing old, and we have won their children to our cause.

"Nineteen years ago I was a completely unknown

man. Now I stand here with a great nation behind me, ready for anything. After achieving all this, do you suppose that such opposition as still exists can count for anything? I never gave in when I was weak, when I was in prison, or when I was forbidden to speak in public. *And to-day the power is in my hands!*”

The Führer's strident voice rose to a shout. His face was flushed and his eyes blazed. In one of his triumphant gestures, he swept the microphone in front of him off its stand, and sent it crashing to the floor.

Listening to such an harangue, one appreciates how completely the German nation is dominated by the personality of this man, who, in turn, reacts to the impulses of his own temperament with the assurance of a prophet believing himself inspired. Of the 75,000,000 Germans under Hitler's rule as he delivered his speech in Vienna, more than half were hearing his words as they resounded from the wireless receivers fixed in the streets of every town, or rang out in restaurants, theatres and cinemas; in all factories and workshops; in German mines below the ground; in German ships on the high seas and in millions of private homes, besides being printed in every newspaper next day. To Germans, every syllable uttered by the Führer on such an occasion is sacrosanct, and constitutes an unchallengeable pronouncement upon the subject with which it deals.

“In the last five years, out of the once wretched and disorganized German people has grown a nation stronger and prouder than ever before,” he declared dramatically. “Have I not the right to stand here? This is my home! I do not know if Schuschnigg's name will be remembered a hundred years from now, but I know that mine will as the greatest son of Austria!”

The sense of personal destiny that explains much in Herr Hitler's character found expression in his words.

“I believe it to have been the will of God,” he said,

"that a boy from this country should have become the Head of the German nation, and then united his homeland to the Reich. Otherwise, one would have to doubt Divine Providence. There is a Supreme Power, and we are but instruments in its hands. When, on March 9, Schuschnigg broke his pledge to me, I made up my mind that the time had come, and in three days he was broken. On the very day for which he had planned that treasonable plebiscite, I brought my homeland into the Reich. I render thanks to God, Who showed me the way."

In a climax of high-power publicity, the preparations for the plebiscite came to an end. On the Kahlenberg, Leopoldsberg, Cobenzl and other heights around Vienna, red swastikas glowed through the night. Giant bombers cruised in the dark over every Austrian town, flashing, in red electric lights from the underside of their wings, that slogan which had brought about the Anschluss, "*Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Führer.*"

I spent the actual plebiscite day, Sunday, April 10, in visiting polling-booths. To some I went alone and unannounced. Into others I was taken with a party of journalists under the charge of Government officials. There was nothing to suggest that pressure was being brought to bear on the voters. Herr Buerckel, the organizer, had ordered polling-papers to be marked in the privacy of the curtained booths. I saw one or two men demonstratively make their cross in the "Yes" circle before the eyes of the polling-officers, accompanying the act with a loud "Heil Hitler!", but so many other voters took their green envelopes and ballot-papers out of sight that they obviously did not fear being noted as hostile to the regime through doing so.

The former Austrian President, Dr. Miklas, who had lost his office a month before, sent a message to Dr. Seyss-Inquart to say that he intended to vote for the Anschluss. Cardinal Innitzer, the Archbishop of Vienna,

walked over to a polling-booth at 8.0 a.m., and gave the Hitler salute as he came out. The day before I had myself seen two swastika emblems, surrounded by wreaths of gilt laurel, on the walls of the Cardinal's palace, while above its door hung a large Nazi flag. In St. Stephen's Cathedral that morning, which was Palm Sunday, many men bearing palms were also wearing swastika arm-bands.

The 70,000 Czechs and 15,000 Slovaks living in Vienna were allowed to vote at special polling-booths, a privilege which they had always enjoyed. In Germany soldiers are excluded from elections, but the members of the Austrian Army were authorized to take part in the plebiscite.

Around midnight that evening the results of the voting were announced by Dr. Seyss-Inquart to a dense crowd filling the largest concert-hall in Vienna. They showed that out of 4,284,795 who had gone to the polls in Austria, 4,273,884, or 99.75 per cent., had said "Yes" to the Anschluss. We heard Herr Buerckel communicate this result on the wireless to Herr Hitler sitting in Berlin, and receive the Führer's congratulation in return.

There was loud cheering, but, looking down from the gallery, I could not help thinking that this final interment of the old Austria deserved a more dignified setting.

Here was the last fraction of the 52 millions of people who had once lived under the House of Habsburg passing out of independent existence. Soon "Austria," a name so great in history, would be used no more except to identify one of the smaller German provinces.

The reading of the figures by which, as everyone had expected, the annexation of Austria to Germany was confirmed to within a fraction of unanimity, completed a process which had begun when the Vienna Government took the first step towards the Great War by issuing its ultimatum to Serbia.

It had not been the cement of common welfare that

held the mosaic of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire together, but only the tie of dynastic union.

Of its 52,000,000 inhabitants, nearly one-half were Slavs, Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Ruthenians, Croats and Slovenes. These had enjoyed the special favour of the Imperial House. The inferiority to which the Germans of Austria believed that they were relegated under Habsburg rule was the influence which caused Hitler as a youth to make pan-Germanism his life's ideal.

The German element in Austria numbered twelve millions. The Hungarians were ten millions, and there was a Latin fringe, consisting of Rumanians in Transylvania, and Italians at Trieste and in the Trentino, which amounted to four millions. Austria-Hungary also contained 1,500,000 Jews, mainly concentrated in Galicia and in the capital itself.

The lack of solidarity in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire was so obvious and long-standing that it was accepted as normal. The Hungarians held jealously to the constitutional privileges secured to them under the "Compromise" by which the Dual Monarchy took its final form. The Czechs refused to talk German, and formed a nationalist physical-training movement called the Sokols, which were really political clubs.

In most countries, the effect of war is to compose internal differences and consolidate national unity. In Austria-Hungary it had the reverse effect. Sections of the non-German races set themselves to gain their independence in the upheaval. The Czechs deserted to the Russians or the French; Croats went over to the Serbs; Italians of Trieste or Trentino joined up with their kinsmen fighting against the Government whose subjects they were.

With the defeat of the Central Empires, nationalistic claims became more clamorous. In some cases they were supported by a record of services rendered to the Allies.

The statesmen who drafted the terms of peace in Paris tried to prevent the reconstitution of the formidable block of Powers known in the war as the Central Empires by splitting up Austria-Hungary into its constituent parts. M. Tardieu, who was one of them, has argued that they had no choice, as the Dual Monarchy had already been dissolved in anticipation by the war-treaties of alliance made with Italy, Serbia, Rumania, and with representatives of the Nationalist elements in Poland and Bohemia. They failed to realize that this measure, by creating a series of small, weak States in Central Europe, would make it easier for Germany to establish her authority over them when she regained her national strength.

Not only did the Allied Powers overlook the disastrous consequences of disrupting a State which had given rise to the international axiom that "If Austria did not exist, it would be necessary to invent her," but they followed conflicting policies in the Central European area which they had thus dissected.

The French subsidized the Little Entente, of which one State, Czecho-Slovakia, was wholly, and the other two, Rumania and Jugoslavia, were partly built up out of the wreckage of Austria-Hungary. Italy, on the other hand, supported the revisionist claims of Hungary, which the Little Entente had been formed to oppose. Great Britain disinterested herself entirely from Central European affairs.

In the years immediately following the Peace Treaties, British and French Socialists protested strongly against the denial to Austria of the right to join up with Germany. They were just as vigorous in demanding the Anschluss in the early 1920's as they were in denouncing it when it came about in the late 1930's.

With the passage of time, it became increasingly apparent that the mutilated fraction of territory which still bore the name of Austria was incapable of economic survival.

There had been no Customs barrier inside the great expanse of 240,000 square miles of Central Europe making up the old Austrian Empire. From 1919 onwards a network of them crossed it in all directions, dividing mutually complementary areas into small autarchic States, each engaged in costly and ineffective efforts to achieve self-sufficiency.

The small country left by the Allied peace-makers to bear the name of "Austria" was no more than the isolated control-station of a great economic mechanism that had been broken up. Like a limbless trunk, the Austrian Republic could do nothing for itself.

Austria thus became Europe's perpetual "deserving case." After the abandonment of the fantastic scheme to collect Reparations from this ruined country by means of a local Allied Commission which cost more to maintain than the Government itself, repeated attempts were made to "put Austria on her feet." Loans were made to her, backed by the League of Nations and by the British Government; advances were granted by the Bank of England; there were plans for exchange of products with the Little Entente; an agreement with Italy and Hungary, known as the Rome Protocols; and a scheme, launched at the ill-fated Stresa Conference, for the creation of a Danubian Confederation, of which nothing was ever afterwards heard.

After Stresa, the break-up of the Western Powers into hostile camps finally opened wide the door to German intervention in the affairs of an adjoining country of the same blood and language.

In this way was the forecast fulfilled which the German Ambassador, Prince Bulow, made on leaving Rome when Italy declared war on Germany in 1916:

"Even if we lose the war, we shall still be winners, because we shall annex Austria."

In the roundabout way which human affairs so often take, the Allies, by the use they made of their victory, laid

the basis for Germany's future expansion into Austria, and thence over Eastern Europe.

So ended the division of the German race into North and South which began in 1756, when Frederick the Great started Prussia's career of conquest by his sudden attack upon Maria Theresa in time of peace.

During the Anschluss, I met a French colleague who had been with me in Vienna after the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand and his wife in 1914. He reminded me that at their funeral, as we watched the parade of Austrian generals in their white tunics and green-plumed cocked hats, I had said to him:

"Let us take a good look at this Austrian pomp and circumstance. It may be the last time we shall ever see it." A month later, the war put an end to all the old splendour of Austrian life, so rich in romance, charm, tradition and ceremonial dignity.

It was now the turn of Austria herself to disappear. The Führer had boldly carried out a policy from which even his hero the Iron Chancellor himself had recoiled. After the German victory in the war of 1866, Bismarck replied to those who urged the extension of German authority to the Danube that Vienna could never be governed from Berlin. The speed of modern communications, however, makes that task much simpler.

There is a marked difference of temperament between these 7,000,000 Catholic South Germans and the highly nationalist and aggressive Prussian stock in whose hands the administration of the Nazi regime principally lies. But the Führer himself is Austrian-born, and the example of Italy has shown how effective the methods of education and organization employed by a totalitarian regime can be in modifying the habits and outlook of a nation.

The continuance of this ruined fragment of the once great Austro-Hungarian Empire had been, since the war, no more than an historical anachronism. Like the over-

throw of the Byzantine Empire or the abolition of the Holy Roman Empire, the annexation of Austria was the suppression of an institution which had long lost its vitality.

The imposing buildings and broad streets of Vienna were but the memorials, and no longer the appurtenances, of a robust nation. When Hitler drafted on a single sheet of paper in that small hotel on the Danube bank at Linz the brief decree which removed Austria from the map of Europe, he was writing only the final paragraph of a chapter of history whose first pages were the Treaty of St. Germain.

The tangible benefits of the Anschluss to Germany were considerable; the strategical and moral advantages it brought were greater still.

The annexation of Austria added to the German frontiers 32,000 square miles, which were 25,000 square miles more than Germany had lost under the Peace Treaties. Her population was increased by 6,786,000, 94 per cent. of these being Catholics and 200,000 Jews, who were practically all concentrated in Vienna, and of whom, by the end of 1938, one quarter had been forced to emigrate. The extension of Germany's political influence in Central Europe may be measured by the fact that this expansion brought her into direct frontier contact with four fresh Central European States—Hungary, Yugoslavia, Italy and the Principality of Liechtenstein. She now has more neighbours than any other country in Europe, her borders touching:

Denmark, in the North;
Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France in the West;
Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Italy in the South;
Yugoslavia and Hungary in the South-East; and
Slovakia, Lithuania and Poland in the East.

Marshal Goering's strong hand soon made itself felt at the economic levers of Austria. As Minister responsible

for the Four Year Plan, the organization of the resources of this new Province of the Ostmark came under his authority. A swarm of his expert advisers descended upon it, and within a week he had announced certain measures which were to be immediately put in hand. They were:

1. The amalgamation of the Austrian and German currencies.
2. Abolition of Customs duties between the two countries.
3. A scheme for the exploitation of Austrian water-power.
4. Large developments in the armament, mining, chemical and agricultural industries.
5. The building of a new aeroplane factory and Air Force barracks.
6. Improvement of the Austrian railway-system.
7. The construction of 775 miles of motor-roads in Austria on the model of the German *Autobahnen*, and the building of four new bridges over the Danube. Within a month of the Anschluss, Herr Hitler in person had turned the first sod of the new motor-road to be built from Salzburg to Vienna, which will form part of the transcontinental automobile route from the English Channel to the Bosphorus.

Marshal Goering himself had not been able to come to Austria with the Führer at the time of the Anschluss. "You have seen something that I have not seen. I envy you," he said, when I called on him at Karinhall a week or two later.

"It was impossible for me to go while the Führer was there. He will never allow me even to travel on the same train or in the same car as himself; it is too risky."

The Marshal accordingly paid the newly annexed territory a visit about a fortnight after the annexation, and made a State tour of the country, which included a journey down the Danube by steamer and took him to Mauterndorf, an old castle in Tyrol belonging to his mother's family, where as a boy he had sometimes spent the summer-holidays.

The industrial equipment of Austria proved to be of poor quality. An expert examination of every factory was ordered, and even some of the best-known works in the country were found to be largely furnished with out-of-date plant, which was replaced without delay.

The greatest undertaking established there since the Anschluss is the Hermann Goering Iron Works, near Linz, for whose 50,000 employees an entirely new town was built close by.

One of the most serious of German forfeits under the Treaty of Versailles had been that of the iron ore of Lorraine, for since then the country had produced only about 20 per cent. of its national requirements in this material. Austria has largely made up the loss by bringing into the German stock additional deposits estimated at 220,000,000 tons with an iron-content of about 40 per cent. There is a mountain so rich in ore as to bear the name of Eisenberg.

Of timber Austria had plenty. Her annexation increased the forest-area of the Reich by 25 per cent. She possessed also mines of magnesite, graphite, copper, lead and salt.

In agricultural produce, the new territory was barely self-supporting, and the Anschluss did not diminish Germany's own dependence upon imports for about one-fourth of her food-supply. The annexation was, however, a paying proposition in the sense that Austria had a favourable trade balance of close on £2,000,000 a year. This was largely due to her flourishing tourist-industry and the income derived from transit goods-traffic.

The gold reserves of Vienna were estimated at £10,000,000, and were added to the scanty Reichsbank store of that metal which, according to published figures, was, at the time, down to £6,000,000. Austrian water-power was a national resource whose capacities had never been developed to more than about 10 per cent. They were calculated at 25,000 million kilowatt-hours annually.

But the advantages of the Anschluss were not to be measured in material gains alone. The Austrians benefited by the opening up to them of the vast German field of opportunity; by the stimulus of German energy and example, and by the increase of prestige which citizenship of a Great Power brings. The Reich, through the extension of its frontiers into the heart of Central Europe, won a dominating economic position in that part of the Continent. The principal road, river and rail communications of the Balkans with the West of Europe lay henceforth across German territory.

Some disturbance was caused in the summer of 1938 by a declaration from Dr. Funk, the German Minister of Economics, that his Government would not recognize the Austrian foreign debts, of which £17,000,000 had at various times been issued in the form of sterling bonds, bearing interest at 7 per cent., $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and 3 per cent., and guaranteed by the British Government. Of these, £11,000,000 were held by British investors. The United States also held \$50,000,000 of Austrian liabilities, of which half consisted of the unpaid bill for food-supplies sent to relieve starvation in Austria after the war.

German repudiation of these debts was based upon the pretext that the loans had not been granted for economic reasons, but only for the political purpose of preventing union with the Reich.

It soon transpired, however, that this attitude had been taken up to secure a bargaining counter for obtaining a reduction in the rate of interest payable upon the Dawes

and Young Reparation Loans, and within a fortnight from Dr. Funk's speech of June 17, a German delegation in London had negotiated a settlement satisfactory enough for the prices of all Austrian and German securities on the Stock Exchange to advance considerably.

One benefit of the Anschluss to Austria became immediately effective. It was the disappearance of unemployment. Herr Buerckel, the newly-appointed Administrator, had told me on March 13 that the workless in that country numbered 600,000. Within a month, a very large proportion of these had been absorbed. In September I was informed by Dr. Seyss-Inquart that unemployment was down to 5 per cent.

For years the Austrian workless had been living on the scantiest of relief in collections of leaky wooden huts on the outskirts of Vienna and other towns, surrounded in winter by morasses of mud. Some of these squalid hovels had served, twenty years before, as prisoner-of-war camps or base hospitals, and had since been allowed to decay without repair.

In those that I visited around Vienna and Linz, families were living under the most abject conditions, as many as eight in a room, without bed-linen or change of clothing; with no sanitary arrangements; no water laid on, and the minimum of food and fuel. Stunted children splashed in the muddy lanes between the rows of huts. Many of these squatter-families kept rabbits—in one case even pigs—in the hovels where they lived.

With impressive speed, these people were organized on higher standards of citizenship. The men were drafted into the new jobs which sprang up in the stagnant industries directly German authority had been established; the children were gathered into crèches and kindergartens, and the wives and mothers were provided with the elementary essentials of decent existence.

Even Colonel Sepp Dietrich, the commander of Hitler's

bodyguard, one of the toughest soldiers I know, was moved by the conditions in which he had found the poorest children of Vienna existing.

"I have 1700 men here," he told me, "and out of their rations they are daily feeding 1100 children."

Before the Anschluss was a month old, the German Government had made plans, at a cost of £2,000,000, to replace the Vienna slum-camps by proper housing-accommodation, and £400,000 was allotted to the supply of food and clothing for the Austrian poor whose need was greatest.

The "Bavarian Help Train" was sent to the working-class quarters of Vienna to bake bread and provide medical attention.

This "Help Train," a gift from State technical employees to the Government, consists of a dozen giant motor-coaches elaborately fitted up. Some are equipped as surgeries; some as bakeries, or field-kitchens; some with pumps for dealing with floods, or for maintaining a water-supply. The idea was to create a mobile unit which could bring the conveniences of civilization at high speed to any area which had been devastated by catastrophe, or where refugees had unexpectedly concentrated.

Seven dental ambulance-waggon were dispatched to tour the country, treating the children free. Holidays in Germany for the approaching summer were arranged for 10,000 Austrian workers and 10,000 children of war-veterans. Large camps were prepared for boys and girls of the poorer classes. It is by such measures of public welfare, and not only by tireless propaganda and mammoth parades, that the Nazi regime maintains its popularity with the mass of the German people.

The delight and relief displayed by the great majority of the population of Austria when the Anschluss was suddenly thrust upon them had thus a basis in practical benefit. The people were tired of being a poverty-stricken,

divided little nation, uncertain of its future, incapable of self-defence, lacking the material resources necessary for prosperity, dependent upon the goodwill of stronger powers, whose capital city, and administrative, banking, industrial and commercial equipment, designed for a nation of 52,000,000, were now reduced to serving a land populated only by 5,000,000, most of them poor peasants.

For several years they had been looking on at the rapid development of their German kinsmen across the border into a highly organized and relatively prosperous nation, and though the regimentation which is the secret of Nazi success may not have been attractive to the Austrian temperament, there was no denying its efficiency and success. The energetic rulers of Germany knew what they wanted; they went after it ruthlessly, and no one in their own country or outside it seemed able to resist them.

At the time of the Anschluss, Austria felt like a small and bankrupt shopkeeper whose business has been taken over by a flourishing chain-store company. He may have sentimental regrets for the loss of his identity and independence, but he rejoices to be freed from anxieties and worries, and to gain the confidence that comes from association with a powerful and prosperous organization.

This spirit, which brought about the ready Austrian acceptance of the Anschluss, was not understood in England, where the series of ultimatums issued by Herr Hitler on the evening of Friday, March 11, followed by the advance of German troops across the frontier, had created a mental picture of Germany enforcing her will upon a cowed and reluctant population.

Some of the enthusiasm for the Anschluss in Austria may have evaporated during the past year, since realization seldom comes up to expectation.

The Viennese regret the fall of their historic city from the status of a European capital to that of a provincial town like Dresden or Stuttgart. Many former enthusiastic Austrian workers for the Nazi cause are disappointed that

they have not got better jobs. The provinces declare that the falling-off in the number of British and other foreign visitors for summer-tours and winter-sports is not compensated by the large influx of North Germans, who are far from being such free spenders.

But the utter poverty in which many Austrians lived has disappeared. As evidence of the increase of popular purchasing power, a Brewers' Congress held at Vienna in April, 1939, reported that the sale of beer in Austria had trebled since the Anschluss.

CHAPTER X

WHAT HITLER SAW IN ITALY

THE Führer's visit to Italy in May, 1938, had been arranged six months before the Anschluss, but to the outside world it was a demonstration that the Rome-Berlin Axis remained unshaken by that event.

Italy saw in it an opportunity, which she used to the full, for raising her standing in this partnership. Never has so costly and elaborate a display been made not only of a country's historical and artistic treasures, but also of its aerial, naval and military resources, as was arranged for the Führer and the large cortege of chosen observers who accompanied him to Rome.

This was a State visit in the fullest sense of the term. With Herr Hitler travelled not only five members of the German Government, including Herr von Ribbentrop, the Foreign Minister, but also the Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, General Keitel, many high officials of the Nazi Party, and ninety German journalists, among them editors of all the important German newspapers, whose official participation in this Dictator-parade was emphasized by a special attire consisting of a brown tunic and black trousers.

For the diplomatic members of the Führer's suite also a new dress had been designed. It was in black, and the broad bands of silver lace on the sleeves, varying in width with the grade of the wearer, gave it a vaguely naval appearance. For evening wear a silver-braided tail-coat

over an ordinary shirt-front and white waistcoat was the costume. To this had been added a bunch of heavy silver "staff cords" hanging from the shoulders. The effect was handsome and original, and made the wearer a conspicuous figure among the diplomats of other nations, whose tight-buttoned tail-coats smothered in gold oak-leaves have been standardized into what is almost an international uniform. But the combination of a shirt-front with staff cords gave the new evening apparel of German diplomats a certain resemblance to a footman's full-dress livery. It may be this fact which brought about a subsequent modification of it, in which the diplomatic oak-leaves appear on the lapels.

I have never seen a more impressive spectacle than Hitler's arrival at night in Rome. The city had been illuminated on the most fantastic scale. A hundred miles of new electric wiring had been laid, and 45,000 groups of lamps with a total power of 3,500 kilowatts were used for the illuminations along the three-mile drive from the Ostia Station to the Royal Palace of the Quirinal. The little terminus itself had been entirely rebuilt, with a long white colonnade crowned by gilt statues as its frontage. It stands just outside the walls of Rome, close to the peaceful little English cemetery where Keats's grave lies under two tall pine-trees.

Inside the long atrium forming the reception-hall, every high official of the Italian Government and the entire Parliament were gathered to await the Führer on that evening of May 3. The deputies all wore the black Fascist Party uniform.

Amid this galaxy of full dress and glittering decorations, my own top-hat and morning coat became the most conspicuous of costumes, for I was the only person present in plain clothes, and should not have been there at all if Count Ciano had not given me a special ticket. When Mussolini entered the hall, his sharp eyes at once noticed

this solitary civilian figure, and, calling me out of the throng, he began to speak entirely in English.

It was the first time I had heard him carry on a conversation in that language alone. He formed his sentences slowly but accurately, and with quite a good accent. He said that the people of Italy had been very pleased with the speech made by Mr. Chamberlain the night before, in which the Prime Minister had expounded the favourable effects of the Anglo-Italian Agreement signed in Rome a fortnight earlier, on April 16.

It seemed to me that the Duce wanted to emphasize his friendly feelings towards England at the moment when this crowning demonstration of the solidarity of the Rome-Berlin Axis was about to begin. Count Ciano earlier in the day had told me that he hoped a Franco-Italian pact might not be far off. The tone of both, on the eve of the Führer's arrival, left me with the impression that, though determined to keep their friendship with Germany unimpaired, they were then still well disposed towards reconciliation with Britain and with France.

The train drew in a few moments later, and for the first time in his career Herr Hitler was greeted by a ruling Sovereign. Never had I seen his face so flushed or his eyes so bright with eager interest. The immense mass-demonstrations of the Third Reich, with which he is so familiar, are of a different character from displays of Royal pomp. Here were the traditional ornaments of monarchy—mounted escorts in gleaming cuirasses and horsetail-plumed helmets; white-wigged, silk-stockinged footmen, and gold-laced coachmen sitting on the heavily tasselled hammercloths of beautifully horsed gala carriages, in the first of which the King and the Führer took their places to drive through the most classical part of the most historic city in the world, whose beauty had been enhanced by every artifice of skilful and lavish illumination.

Mussolini stayed behind at the station, leaving the

King to accompany the nation's guest alone. As he stood watching the Royal procession move off, he suddenly swung round on the crowd of deputies behind him, and in good-humoured reproach called out: "*Ma gridate!*" (Go on! Cheer!)

Instantly the members of the Italian Parliament broke into a storm of clapping and tumultuous cries of "Duce! Duce!"

"Not me, *him!*" bawled the Duce above the din, pointing after the disappearing carriages, but the chorus of "Duce! Duce!" continued, until, with a shrug of his broad shoulders, Mussolini smiled and got into his car.

All through the Führer's visit, one had the feeling that a double demonstration was going on. Mussolini was trying to impress his German guests with the historic splendour and the warlike capacity of Italy, while the Italian people were demonstrating to Hitler their enthusiasm for their national leader.

It would be difficult to imagine a more lavish reception than had been prepared for the visiting Dictator. From his drive that evening through the splendidly illuminated street of ancient Rome, with the vast Colosseum glowing with red light as if on fire, till the time of his departure a week later from Florence, the Italian Government provided a constant series of magnificent public ceremonies, the cost of which must have far exceeded a million pounds, and which were carried out with a disciplined efficiency that was convincing evidence of the profound improvements wrought in Italy by sixteen years of Fascist rule.

Mussolini first showed his guest the raw material of the nation that he has thus transformed. At Centocelle, in the Campagna, the Fascist youth gave a demonstration of their pre-military training. Fifty thousand of them—foot, horse, artillery, motor-transport and light tanks—manœuvred on the plain, ending with a march-past that was guardsmanlike in its precision, and with the firing of

a volley from their 50,000 carbines that sounded like a single shot.

All the keenness that British boys of the same age devote to football is given by Italian youths to preparation in the arts of war, and there could be no mistaking its value as an asset to the country's martial strength. Three months a year of week-end training had sufficed to bring these brown-faced, sturdy peasant lads to their high standard of discipline. They represented a drilled and organized reserve of boyhood behind the Italian regular Army, for they still had their eighteen months' compulsory service ahead of them. I could see that the Germans were surprised by the military qualities of the coming generation in Italy. General Keitel, the Commander-in-Chief, was talking emphatically to Herr Rudolf Hess, the Führer's Deputy, during the display.

Herr Hitler was next taken to Naples to look for the first time upon the naval forces of an ally. From mid-morning till late afternoon, in the broad bay bounded by Vesuvius, Capri and Ischia, the Führer, standing between the King of Italy and Mussolini on the admiral's bridge of the *Cavour*, watched the evolutions of the Italian Fleet. The climax was reached when ninety black submarines, moving in nine parallel lines of ten, crossed the bows of the flagship, and then suddenly and simultaneously submerged. Within a minute they had all vanished from sight. The surface of the Bay of Naples ahead of us gleamed with deceptive beauty, hiding a greater power of underwater destruction than had ever before been accumulated in one place. Three minutes later, the ninety submarines came to the surface, still together, emerging in the intervals between the parallel lines of the oncoming fleet, and, within sixty seconds more, the deck-guns of all of them were firing.

There followed a feint attack on the *Cavour* by twenty-four *Mases*, swift Italian motor-boats carrying torpedoes. From afar off they came skimming across the

water in groups of three, almost hidden in the fountains of white spray that they flung up, and after a sudden semi-circular swerve alongside the flagship were soon once more half-way to the horizon. This parade of Italian naval strength was followed by the illumination of Naples on a scale which had cost £85,000. Above the white radiance of the tall alabaster columns of light that lined the shores of the bay, and the huge sky-sign of "HEIL HITLER!" dominating the whole city, the red glow of Vesuvius contributed to the spectacle, flaring up from time to time into a baleful spot of crimson light, like the eye of an angry god.

The military parade next day beside the Palatine Hill in Rome may not have made so great an impression upon Hitler as the naval review, for in such matters his own *Wehrmacht* is unrivalled, but no one who knew the Italian Army of the Great War could fail to be amazed at the improvement in the discipline, physique and alertness of the men. The equipment of the artillery and of the motorized troops was of the most up-to-date kind. The march-past of the infantry was carried out at that difficult German parade-step which the Duce had paid his guest the compliment of introducing for the occasion under the name of the *passo romano*. Every branch of the Italian Army was represented, from the Alpini with their ice-axes and snow-shoes to a mustard-gas corps in masks and overalls like sou'westers, and a regiment of bare-footed, red-cloaked Spahis from Libya. The strength of the forces on parade was 30,000 men, 1,000 cars and 600 guns and mortars.

Most impressive as evidence of Italy's war resources was the demonstration of the Italian Air Force at Forbaro, on the coast north of Rome. Offshore, two old merchant-vessels of five thousand tons had been anchored as targets, while, on the broad, flat beach, marked-out areas represented an encampment of troops and a group of factories. The hundreds of planes that took part came by squadrons

from many distant aerodromes, and all arrived at the precise moment when they were due to act in the display.

Hitler and Mussolini, with a small number of guests, took up their stand on the roofs of the Forbaro aerodrome buildings a little over a mile away from the targets. The show began with some first-class aerial acrobatics. Groups of fourteen machines, flying low, looped and rolled and twisted in the sky, seeming to miss each other by inches. Other formations, in spear-head or in line, with wing-tips almost touching, swooped down to throw themselves about in gyrations above our heads without losing their dressing by a yard.

Then came a display of the terrific potentialities of mass-bombing. Flight after flight of aircraft dived, with machine-guns rattling and bombs falling in silver showers obliquely out of the blue sky. The marked-out targets on the ground disappeared beneath a mass of black smoke that looked absolutely solid, and towered hundreds of feet into the air, while the buildings on which we stood quivered in the blast of the explosions. The supposed encampment was smothered with gas-bombs that burst into purple comets as they fell, and the sweet smell of the poisonous vapour was carried towards us on the breeze.

Then the two anchored ships were attacked by successive flights, and in their turn blotted out by a dense curtain of smoke which slowly cleared, to reveal them with torn bulwarks and smashed upper-works gradually settling to the bottom of the twenty feet of water in which they were moored.

From this spectacle of Italy's value as an ally in the air the Führer was hurried away to see a military display in which Italian infantry advanced close behind a barrage of live shell. The whole of this dramatic entertainment was compressed into one morning. It was stated at the time to have cost £200,000.

The concluding memory which Hitler took away with him from Italy was of Florence. Directly he returned to

Germany all the experts working under him on the rebuilding of Berlin and the grandiose schemes of huge constructions for the annual Party Congress at Nuremberg were set to work adapting their plans to the new ideas which the Führer had acquired. It was with an architect's appreciation that he looked upon the original of the Loggia dei Lanzi, a 500-years-old portico reproduced in Munich as the Feldherrnhalle, which, as the scene of the putsch of 1923, is the chief shrine of the Nazi Movement.

Then he mounted to a small balcony high up on the front of the fourteenth-century City Hall, beneath the slender 300-feet-high tower that seems to hang of its own buoyancy in space. From there, heralded by trumpeters in the black and white mediæval livery of Florence, he looked down upon 60,000 citizens packed into the ancient square below, whose cheers rolled back from walls that had seen many stirring events and were now looking upon yet another memorable development in history.

Throughout the visit one felt surprised by the freedom with which these two men, who have more enemies than anyone else in the world, showed themselves in public side by side. The Dictators certainly cannot be accused of lacking courage. They share the conviction that they are creatures of Destiny, pursuing a mission whose fulfilment is guaranteed by Fate.

Very thorough precautions were taken by the secret police of both countries during the Führer's visit, but such measures would avail nothing against either a madman or a desperate assassin.

What had been going on behind the costly show and impressive parades of arms that accompanied this visit?

No record of the conversations that took place was ever given to the world, for the two Dictators talked alone as man to man. Not even Count Ciano and Herr von Ribbentrop were present at these intimate discussions, which

were to have a profound effect, by no means yet exhausted, upon future developments in Europe. The knowledge of German which Mussolini acquired while acting as a young school-teacher in what was then the Austrian province of the Trentino, made it possible for them to do without an interpreter, so that the two most powerful men in Europe could discuss their ambitious plans in privacy.

One can only judge by casual indications what were the confidences that they exchanged. It is certain that Hitler informed Mussolini of his intention to push on vigorously with his claim to annex the Sudeten Germans to the Reich. Signor Virginio Gayda, Editor of the *Giornale d'Italia*, and the Duce's political confidant and mouthpiece, remarked at a luncheon at the Belgian Legation during the visit that Czecho-Slovakia would almost certainly be partitioned before the end of the year.

There can further be no doubt that Mussolini gave a promise of his support to these German plans in Central Europe. He must by this time have resigned himself to being ousted from the position of preponderance in the Danube valley which he had built up.

The Anschluss had been the funeral of all such schemes for extending Italian influence. Central Europe was henceforth the preserve of the Duce's powerful partner. The Mediterranean was the only sphere where Italy could now look for expansion, whether territorial or economic.

It was reported to me at the time that Mussolini had stipulated in these conversations for a free hand in the Balkans, so as to ensure his food-supplies across the Adriatic if Italy became involved in war. This was confirmed by the Italian seizure of Albania on Good Friday, 1939.

In Hitler's mind there may well, at this time, have been the apprehension of an attempt by the British and French Governments to lure Italy away from the Rome-Berlin Axis by making concessions to her in the Mediterranean. During that week of May, 1938, however, any misgivings existing between the two Dictators were

cleared up, for, within a few days of the Führer's departure from Italy, the Duce made a speech at Genoa in which he once more nailed his colours to the Rome-Berlin Axis.

Dealing with the doubts which many, even of his own fellow-countrymen, felt as to the wisdom of his acquiescence in the Anschluss, he remarked that since 1934, when Italy had opposed that step, much water had flowed beneath the bridges of all European capitals, and that meanwhile Italy had been subjected to Sanctions, "which we have not yet forgotten."

The policy of Stresa, he said, was "dead and buried," and would never be revived. The German and the Roman worlds were now in immediate contact. The collaboration between their two revolutionary movements was destined to leave its mark upon the present century.

This speech strengthened the foundations of the action which Hitler, four months later, took against Czecho-Slovakia. But that was only one instalment of the co-operative activities upon which the two Dictators resolved in their secret conferences during the week that they spent together. The full extent to which Italy figures in these schemes is yet to be revealed.

The great effort and vast outlay that Mussolini had made to impress his visitors were not wasted, for one could see the German attitude gradually changing from half-concealed patronage almost to admiration. Few of these Germans had any previous personal experience of the new "toughness" and self-confidence which the Duce has imparted to the Italian character. I was present on one occasion when a minor member of the German group, wearing plain clothes and in the dark, tried to force his way through a cordon of Italian police only to be seized by the throat and literally flung down a flight of steps. He picked himself up, muttering in his own language and a tone of impressed astonishment, "Tell me, do you treat all your guests this way?"

There had been speculation as to whether Hitler might make some overture of rapprochement towards the Pope. Nothing of the kind occurred, and he did not cross the boundary of the Vatican City, though his route to Forbaro took him for a few hundred yards just outside it, so that he had a view of the façade of St. Peter's.

At the beginning of April, Cardinal Innitzer, the Sudeten German Primate of Austria, who had welcomed the Anschluss not only with joy-peals on the church bells but by adding "Heil Hitler!" to his signature of an official letter addressed to the new German authorities in Vienna, had come to Rome to submit to the Pope and the Cardinal-Secretary of State a scheme for a new understanding between the Vatican and the Third Reich.

The Pope, however, declared that the Church in Austria had gone far enough in its display of goodwill towards the new regime, and required something more concrete than promises before adding another agreement to the existing Concordat, about whose non-fulfilment by the German Government he had already made such frequent and bitter complaints.

No attempt was made by the Duce to act as mediator between his German guest and the Head of the Roman Church, despite the fact that the Italian Dictator himself has maintained cordial relations with the Vatican. In this matter of religious tolerance there is a striking difference between the Nazi and Fascist ideologies. "It is a great mistake to oppose the Church, for it is like fighting fog," a well-known Italian statesman once remarked to me. "The Fascist Government is content to leave the souls of Italians to the priest—at any rate when they have left their bodies."

The Vatican, for its part, affected almost complete ignorance of the presence of the Führer in Rome. The Pope himself left for his summer residence at Castel Gandolfo, where, in a speech, he referred to the decoration

of Rome with a flag bearing a cross "which was not the cross of Christ."

There had been a great change in the attitude of the Holy Father since he remarked two or three years before to a diplomat accredited to the Vatican: "After all, there are only two people who have done anything against Communism—Hitler and myself." In official German quarters I was told that Pope Pius XI was considered too anti-German for any reconciliation to be possible. The new Pontiff, Pius XII, has not been long enough on the Papal Throne to have adopted a clear policy towards the totalitarian States. He has personal knowledge of both Dictators. As Cardinal-Secretary of State, he came into contact with Mussolini. In 1923, when he was Papal Nuncio at Munich, Cardinal Pacelli had several interviews with Hitler in the earliest days of the National Socialist Party.

On the whole, Herr Hitler's first visit as Führer, for more than a few hours, to a foreign country, and his inspection of his fellow-Dictator's regime, enlarged his political horizon and confirmed his confidence in the policy of the Axis.

He paid the Italians the compliment of always bearing on his sleeve the badge of "Corporal of Honour of the Fascist Militia," which Mussolini had bestowed upon him as the only other holder of that title beside the Duce himself. This distinction involved the wearing of an ivory-hilted dagger. It was the first time Herr Hitler had been seen with such a weapon, though a dagger is an indispensable accoutrement of all uniforms of the Nazi movement, being regarded as a symbol of the ancient right of all freemen to bear arms. Mussolini, for his part, appeared on every full-dress occasion during the visit with the red cordon of the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle, a creation of the Führer's which the Duce had been the first to receive.

Watching the firework display, big as an eruption, that accompanied Hitler's departure from the railway station of Florence, and mingling on the Lung'Arno with the festival crowds, who were delighted by the spectacle of their lovely city repainted, beflagged and flooded with illuminations as never before, one could not escape the grim reflection that this visit had been the brilliant prelude to a division of Europe into two hostile alliances. The Anti-Comintern Pact had already united an enlarged Germany with Italy and Japan. To that combination Hungary and Spain have since been added. This in turn has led to the extension of British and French engagements on the Continent.

At the cordial leave-taking of Hitler and Mussolini, I remembered the last time that I had looked on as the Duce accompanied a foreign statesman to his train. It had been at the departure of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald from Stresa three years before.

How great a change the European picture had since undergone! In its early days the fierce determination of the Nazi regime to restore Germany as a formidable Power in Europe tended to draw Italy closer to Britain and France. Within two months of Hitler's accession, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Sir John Simon paid a visit to Rome, where Mussolini proposed to them a Four Power Pact, as the only workable method of ensuring European peace.

The Duce who, despite the flamboyance of his public speeches, is a very shrewd statesman, clearly foresaw what was coming in Germany. He wanted the Western Powers to reconcile themselves with that nation of 65,000,000 disciplined, laborious and resentful people before Hitler had had time to organize them into a formidable military machine.

The Four Power Pact was initialled in Rome in July, 1933, but it never came into force because of Poland's resentment at being omitted from negotiations in which she claimed she was entitled by her international standing

to take part. The French Government, whose foreign policy during the critical six years of the Nazi regime's existence has been even more shortsighted than that of Britain, were too fearful of offending their ally to carry the Four Power Pact any further. Thus Western Europe's chance of effecting a settlement with Germany before she became strong enough to impose her terms by the threat of force was missed.

Britain and France had then been in the position of a set of country gentlefolk in whose midst a newly-rich and aggressive-tempered social climber comes to settle. The question arises whether the unwelcome intruder is to be boycotted or received on a footing of equality. Dislike of his personal manners may suggest the former course, but there is the risk that ostracism may provoke him into making a nuisance of himself. In England, good sense generally leads to the newcomer being handled with such tact that he eventually comes to feel that his own interests and those of his neighbours are identical.

It was a less sagacious course that the Western Powers followed in their attitude towards Germany. They would not admit her to the inner circle. They passed frequent votes of censure upon her conduct, practices and standards.

Like an individual socially isolated, a nation held at arm's-length by its neighbours develops a resentment that deepens into wrath as its capacity for reprisal increases. Had the Western Powers acted on Mussolini's sound instinct to admit Germany to the Allied Club, the new men who found themselves in charge of the great resources of the German nation might have been flattered into adopting a policy of friendly collaboration. The discussion of Germany's grievances on a basis of equality between her and her former conquerors would at that stage have made it possible to reach an agreement far less costly than the present competition of armaments.

Though the blunders of our foreign policy are a theme that must constantly recur in any survey of the perilous position to which they have brought the British and French nations, they can be fully understood only if their chronology is recalled.

Exactly one year after Mussolini's practical proposal of the Four Power Pact had been dropped because France clung to her since disrupted system of Continental alliances, and Britain to her now vanished confidence in the Covenant of the League of Nations as the respective bulwarks of their security, the first foreign crisis due to the establishment of the Nazi regime occurred. The Austrian putsch of July, 1934, which led to the death of Dollfuss, was a demonstration to Europe of the powerful ferment working in her midst.

In December of that same year, 1934, occurred the incident at Wal-Wal on the frontier of Italian Somaliland which was the starting-point of the ultimate rupture between Italy and the Western Powers.

When this issue was still only a small cloud on the horizon, the French Premier, M. Laval, one of the few realists among contemporary statesmen in his country, visited Rome in January, 1935, and came to an agreement with Mussolini by which arrangements were made to settle outstanding difficulties, while at the same time Mussolini received the impression that, so far as France was concerned, he had a free hand to deal with Abyssinia as he liked.

The Italian Ambassador in London, Count Grandi, was constantly trying to sound the British Foreign Office with regard to its attitude on the same question, but characteristic British reluctance to face any problem until it has become critical led to his receiving only vague and non-committal replies.

Two months later, in March, 1935, German self-assertion was carried a step further by repudiation of the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty and the establishment of a national service Army and Air Force.

Full of alarm and indignation at these developments, the three Western Powers held their famous Conference at Stresa, which resulted in a formal condemnation of Germany's "unilateral action."

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and the greater part of the British Press celebrated this futile gesture as a powerful contribution to the cause of European peace. Signor Mussolini himself was under no such illusion. On the very day the Conference began he contributed an unsigned article to the *Popolo d'Italia*, deriding such international consultations as being "the last expedient of indecision when faced with realities."

If the former Allies of the Great War had really meant to face the prospect of Germany's rapid recovery of strength—which would assuredly be followed by further far-reaching claims—they should have come to an understanding at Stresa on all matters which might ultimately breed division among themselves.

The result of their omission to do so was to make the vaunted "solidarity" of the "Stresa Front" a hollow sham. Everybody present at the Conference was aware that Italian troops were being dispatched to Eritrea for aggressive purposes. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Sir John Simon never raised the question of Italian intentions in East Africa. Yet a few months later those same intentions were made the basis of the Sanctions in which the British Government adopted a more hostile attitude with regard to Italy than she has ever taken up towards Nazi Germany.

Mussolini believed the silence of the British representatives at Stresa to be a form of consent to his plans in East Africa. If objections to the Abyssinian campaign had at that stage been raised, they might have had some practical effect. But several months were allowed to elapse before Mr. Eden was sent to try to argue Mussolini out of his intentions. The futility of his mission was

summed up in the words the Duce used to me on August 22, 1935: "Even if I would, I could not draw back now. Two hundred thousand Italian rifles would go off of themselves."

On October 4, 1935, Italy invaded Abyssinia, and the imposition of Sanctions by the League of Nations at the instigation of Britain followed shortly afterwards. Underestimation of Italy's military capacity led the British Government from one blunder to another. The Hoare-Laval Plan, drafted in December, would have saved its face by keeping the Emperor of Abyssinia on his throne, since Mussolini agreed to the scheme as privately communicated to him. The compromise was also approved by the Cabinet, but they abandoned it when a loud outcry from members of the League of Nations Union and other sincere but short-sighted idealists followed on its premature publication in the French Press.

Sanctions were then continued, filling the Italian nation both with resentment and contempt for the failure of Britain and the League of Nations to impose their will.

It was at this time, the beginning of 1936, that Mussolini made up his mind to throw in his lot with Germany. In her he saw strength and resolution, while in Britain and France he could perceive nothing but weakness in arms and ineptitude in counsel.

"You are pursuing a policy based on vague principles instead of national interests," he said to me on January 24. "That is very dangerous for you. The British Government is obsessed by the ideals of the League of Nations and of collective security. There is nothing behind those words: they are founded on a sham.

"Who was the creator of the League of Nations? President Wilson, whose country repudiated it. When the next European war starts, there will not even be time for the delegates of the Powers to reach Geneva. Your Government's infatuation for the League is steadily turning Germany, Japan and Italy into three discontented States.

That is a very dangerous situation for the peace of the world."

Speaking of Germany, he added: "The Germans are a most formidable Power. The Nazi philosophy has seized upon the minds of the whole people, who have made it their own. It is the Nazi aim to group a hundred million Germans under their authority, and eventually to establish German hegemony in Europe."

By the beginning of May, 1936, the Emperor of Abyssinia was a fugitive, and the Italians had taken Addis Ababa. In the following month, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, criticized the continuance of Sanctions as "midsummer madness," and in July they were given up, leaving Italy triumphant and completely alienated from her Stresa friends of the year before.

Time might have been expected to heal the bitterness engendered by the ineffective policy which the British Government had based on the principles of the League Covenant, but it was working against those who had misused so many opportunities. In the same month of July in which the anti-Italian policy of Sanctions was abandoned, two new developments occurred that brought Italy and Germany still closer to each other. The first was the "July Pact" between Hitler and Schuschnigg, which reduced the uneasiness that Italy had felt since the Dollfuss putsch about German activities in Austria, and the second was the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

This latter disastrous occurrence had the effect of emphasizing the community of political ideals and institutions existing between Italy and Germany. It soon resulted in their union as military allies for the common support of the Nationalist cause in Spain, while very large and vocal sections of British and French public opinion became violent in abuse of them both.

It was these conditions which led to Count Ciano's visit to Berlin in October, 1936, where the forging was

begun of that Rome-Berlin Axis whose creation Mussolini announced in his speech at Milan the following month.

Since then, efforts by the British Government to heal the breach, which its own blunder in imposing Sanctions had opened, have been ineffective attempts to put back the clock. Despite the signature of the "Gentleman's Agreement" on July 2, 1937, and Mr. Chamberlain's friendly letter to Mussolini in the August after he became Prime Minister, Anglo-Italian relations continued to be poisoned by differences arising out of the Spanish Civil War, and by the announcement of Italian aims in the Mediterranean.

In November, 1937, Mussolini expanded the Rome-Berlin Axis by signing the Anti-Comintern Pact which linked him also with Japan. In the following month Italy left the League, and in March, 1938, she stood by as a consenting, if not rejoicing, party while Germany annexed Austria and advanced the frontiers of the Third Reich to her own. Rarely in history have three years been so unfortunate for British foreign policy as those which lay between Stresa and the Anschluss.

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CHAPTER XI

GROWTH OF THE SUDETEN PROBLEM

THE British race seldom shows concern for any foreign problem before it has reached a state of crisis. This habit is as much the rule with those in charge of public affairs as among the mass of the people.

Until the year 1938, not one Briton in a thousand had ever heard the word "Sudeten," or burdened his mind with any exact information about the origin, composition and whereabouts of the Czecho-Slovak Republic. Yet these matters, which were suddenly to force themselves upon the country's attention as the elements of a dangerous international situation, had constituted a potential peril to Europe for twenty years. If political perception in Great Britain had been more alert, it might have been possible to find means of keeping this long-simmering Central European kettle from boiling over.

Lord Rothermere's was the only voice in England to give warning of the strain developing in Czecho-Slovakia. He repeatedly asserted in the columns of *The Daily Mail* that an international crisis would some day develop out of what he called "this spurious and synthetic State," for which he accurately predicted the fate of being "elbowed out of existence overnight." But in Britain no gift is less regarded than that of foresight in foreign affairs, and the problem of Czecho-Slovakia's minorities was allowed to develop unnoticed until it came near to embroiling the whole of Western Europe.

In the composite Czecho-Slovak Republic of 15,000,000 people, the Peace Treaties had included $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions of inhabitants of German race, speech and institutions, who were formerly subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. These Sudeten Germans formed a minority too weak to exact equitable treatment from the alien Government under whose rule they had been placed, and too numerous to be oppressed with impunity.

The inclusion of so indigestible a foreign element in Czecho-Slovakia was due to two considerations. In the first place it provided the newly-formed State with a strong natural mountain-frontier against Germany. At the Peace Conference, France had especially favoured the creation of Czecho-Slovakia in the expectation that she would be an anti-German outpost in Central Europe, holding a position of great strategic advantage, with the Sudeten area at its Western end forming a salient into the heart of Germany between Munich and Berlin. The second reason why the Czechs and their friends among the Allied treaty-makers insisted on retention of the Sudeten area was that it contained the principal industries of Bohemia, and had valuable deposits of brown coal and iron ore.

The men who drew the boundaries of Czecho-Slovakia failed to realize that however strong the natural frontier of a State may be, and however rich its economic resources, incompatibility among its human elements is a fundamental weakness for which no other advantages can compensate. Germans and Slavs had certainly lived together for centuries as citizens of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, but to combine them within the frontiers of a small and artificially-constituted country was to lay the foundations of certain trouble. The Czechs, in pre-war times, were always resentful of the German rule of the Habsburg dynasty, indulgent though its attitude had been towards them. They took advantage of their newly-gained authority over a German minority to vent upon it generations of accumulated spite.

That the complaints of the Sudeten Germans were not imaginary is proved by the fact that the other large block of alien population attached to Czecho-Slovakia by the Peace Treaties—the 750,000 Magyars along their southern frontier—had exactly the same grievances.

Even the Slovaks, a kindred community to the Czechs, who had expected to be admitted to the newly-formed nationality on a basis of full partnership, were far from satisfied with the treatment meted out to them. For twenty years they pressed in vain for the fulfilment of the "Pittsburg Agreement," signed by Dr. Masaryk, the first President of Czecho-Slovakia, on May 30, 1918, by which the Slovaks were promised their own local administration, Parliament and judicature.

The spokesman of this demand, a Slovak deputy, M. Tuka, was in 1928 sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment. It has even been alleged that gangster-like methods were employed by the Czecho-Slovak Government during the first years of its existence in an attempt to obtain possession of the original copy of the "Pittsburg Agreement," which had been left in the safe keeping of the Chairman of the Slovak League in the United States. When he died, in 1921, his house was ransacked by unknown burglars, who are supposed to have been searching for this document. Not until May, 1938, was the "Pittsburg Agreement" brought over to Slovakia under the escort of a large Slovak delegation.

The fault of the Czech Government, in fact, was that it was double-faced. While posing to the world outside as a model democracy, it carried on an internal policy anything but democratic in its methods. Czecho-Slovakia was what is known as a "Police State." The "Police Law" had precedence over the "constitutional law."

In political matters personal liberty did not exist. People arrested on charges of that kind were held in prison without trial for weeks. From time to time, gener-

ally as the result of deals between the Government and other parties in the State, amnesties would be declared. At one of these, in 1937, as many as 4,000 prisoners were released, of whom the majority had never been allowed to answer the accusations made against them.

As Conrad Henlein, the Sudeten Leader, said to me, "You English have practised democracy for 400 years, and you think that democratic institutions will suit everyone. But here in Czecho-Slovakia democratic institutions are a sham."

Bloodshed was of rare occurrence under the persecution to which the 3½ million Sudetens were subjected by their Czech overlords. The grievances from which they suffered were rather those of humiliation, discrimination and exploitation. Though they were taxed as highly as other Czecho-Slovak citizens, the proceeds of their contributions were expended to the advantage of those parts of the country inhabited by Czechs.

They were debarred from employment in any but the lower grades of public services. They lived under the suspicious observation and close control of the Czech police, few of whom spoke their language. Government officials stationed in their midst acted as if they were administering a conquered territory, keeping themselves apart from the German population, and obtaining their supplies only from Czech tradespeople or, when too few in numbers to maintain local purveyors of their own, importing them from areas outside the Sudeten zone.

During the first fifteen years after the war no urgent demand came from the Sudeten Germans for a change of nationality, but this is no proof that they were contented with their lot. They resigned themselves to it only because the condition of both the neighbouring German nations was then so depressed that they would have gained no advantage by attachment to them. When the frontiers of Czecho-Slovakia were originally drawn, they did, indeed,

petition to be included with Austria, the country to which they had formerly belonged. This, together with the demand for a plebiscite in the Sudeten districts, was refused by the Allied Powers. During the demonstrations in support of these appeals, fifty-two Sudetens were shot by the Czech police.

Though politically oppressed, the Sudetens in the early post-war years were economically prosperous, for the area in which they lived was highly industrialized. This circumstance, however, made them the more vulnerable to the effects of the world depression which set in three years before the Nazi regime acquired control of Germany. Financial distress added to their resentment of the vexatious treatment to which they were subjected by an alien Government. It was natural, when Hitler came to power and began both to abolish unemployment and to build up the German national strength, that the Sudetens should try to improve their own unfortunate lot by similar self-help.

At Eger, a bronze tablet hangs on the wall of a little vaulted room in an ancient convent, built in the year 1500, which is now a wine-restaurant known as the "Eternal Light." It reads:

"Von dieser Stätte erlies Konrad Henlein an die Sudetendeutschen den denkwürdigen Aufruf des 1. Oktober 1933 zur politischen Einheitsbewegung."

This memorial records that Conrad Henlein, from that room, nine months after Hitler's accession to the Chancellorship, issued his appeal to the Sudeten Germans to join him in a movement of political unity. It is certain that neither he nor his followers had then any vision of how far their movement would carry them.

No one could visit the Egerland and the Sudetengebiet, as the two principal areas inhabited by the German minority were called, without recognizing the hundred-

per-cent. national character of the country. The architecture, dress, habits of life and physical appearance of the people are as typically German as if this were the very heart of the Reich.

The towns, with their high-gabled houses and quaint, cloistered courtyards, recall the illustrations of a book of Grimm's fairy-tales. Their inhabitants, like those of the white farmhouses in the countryside around, have generally lived in them from one generation to another for centuries. Eger itself, where Wallenstein was murdered in the Thirty Years' War, came to be joined to the territory of the King of Bohemia only as a pledge given to him by the German Emperor in guarantee of a loan. According to local legend, the town's coat-of-arms, showing an eagle behind bars, is a memento of its hypothecated condition.

The contrast between this area and the rest of Czecho-Slovakia was so abrupt that, though its borders were unmarked, one became at once conscious of entering it some 40 miles from Prague. Not only was the transit revealed by the changed appearance of the people and the greater neatness of their villages, but the quality of the road itself suddenly deteriorated on reaching the Sudeten area, owing to the Czech Government's practice of stinting public expenditure upon that part of the country.

Though the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia formed only 25 per cent. of the whole population, between 40 per cent. and 50 per cent. of the total unemployed of the country belonged to that section of the nation in the years 1935-36, the last for which figures were available. The suicide-rate in the Sudeten area was much higher than in any other European State. The German citizens of Czecho-Slovakia had also the highest number of childless marriages and the smallest excess of births. The infant mortality-rate among them was much greater than among the Czechs.

Here was a compact population, differing in race from the State to which it belonged, and thoroughly discon-

tented with its lot. In numbers, the Sudeten Germans were roughly equal to the inhabitants of Eire, and the Czech Government would have been well advised to adopt towards their Teuton fringe a similar policy of concession to that followed by the British Government in its dealings with the Irish Free State. For, in the earlier years of the movement founded by Conrad Henlein, the aim of the Sudeten Germans was not separation but local autonomy.

The Czechs, however, persisted in administering the Sudetenland as a subject territory. Between 1921 and 1930, the number of Germans employed in such public services as the Post Office, the railways and the municipalities was reduced by 50 per cent. Industrial depression in the area was increased by the fact that, though 85 per cent. of its population was German, only 16 per cent. of the State contracts in that district were given to German firms while the Czech undertakings established there obtained 84 per cent.—in direct inverse proportion to their numbers.

By use of their financial resources, Czech and Jewish banks in Prague were able to get control of about half the German industries in the Sudetenland. When one saw a commercial undertaking in operation, whether it was a glass-works, a brown-coal quarry, a textile mill or a leather factory, one would be told as often as not that it was under *Zwangswirtschaft*. Even for such lowly tasks as road repairs, Czech labour was often drafted into the Sudeten area while the local German unemployed were compelled to look on in idleness.

When a Sudeten German artisan could find employment, his wages were only at about half the rates prevailing across the German border. Every Sudeten who could manage it used to go over into Germany to work. For this a frontier-pass was necessary, and the Czech authorities issued them sparingly. Had it not been that some of the Sudeten frontier-population managed in this way to live

on the industrial activity of the Nazi Reich, their distress would have been even greater.

Such were the stories one heard everywhere in the Sudetenland. Allegations about the German Government's oppression of racial and political minorities in its own country are so common that it was a curious experience to find in Czecho-Slovakia a typical German population being in turn oppressed.

Yet these Sudetens were quiet, well-behaved, decent people, of the kind that any wise Government would have been glad to have as citizens, and would have done its best to weld firmly into the framework of the State. It was not the keen, aggressive, challenging Nazi spirit that animated them, but a sober and patient desire for the redress of real grievances. Even the officials of the Sudeten German Party were careful to avoid anything which might provoke the Czechs. They never wore the badge of their organization, though it consisted solely of the harmless initials "S.D.P.," unless they were within the Sudeten area.

In their seventeenth-century towns and villages, the Sudetens led the kind of existence that in Germany itself is fast disappearing under the strict regimentation of the Nazi regime. The atmosphere of the days of Schiller and Heine still lingered in this historic German land—the spirit to which the modern up-to-date German refers rather contemptuously as that of the *Biedemeier-Zeit*.

The evening scene in the old inn at Eger, called the *Ewiges Licht*, was characteristic. A dull crimson lamp glowed above the Gothic stone entrance of what had been a convent for noble ladies. The doorway opens off a romantic, shadowy courtyard where the chapel of the former religious house now contains the Sudeten war-memorial. This dark entrance leads to a vaulted hall which was probably at one time a refectory, where, sitting at heavy, wooden tables, one found groups of people who

might have stepped out of the German picture-books of fifty years ago—patriarchally bearded old men, smoking long cherrywood pipes with coloured porcelain bowls; buxom women with their hair smoothed down and done into a neat little bun behind—nearly all of them with at least a suggestion of the local peasant-costume in their dress.

On the night that I went in there for a late evening meal, the members of one of these *Stammtische*, or little parties that meet every evening, sent the flaxen-haired young waitress across with an invitation for me to join them. In the two or three hours that followed I heard many stories, petty in themselves perhaps, but significant by their number, of the deliberately vexatious treatment to which such obviously honest and peaceable people were subjected by the Czechs, on no other ground than that they belonged to a different race and spoke a different tongue.

To cite only one instance: Though the Czech Government's budget voted large sums annually for what were described as "minority schools," these were not allotted to the education of the children of the German minority, but to the building and upkeep of schools for the families of the local "minority" of Czech officials and other imported settlers of that race in the Sudeten area. A handful of Czech children would be collected by motor-bus from a wide area to enjoy the advantages of these modern institutions, while the German children would be crowded into old-fashioned and inadequate schools, which were stinted of money because the instruction given there was not in Czech.

A tour of the Sudeten country, such as I made in the spring of 1938, several months before its political affairs reached the stage of crisis, revealed a serious state of economic and political distress. The fault of the Czechs lay in the fact that, with the arrogance that besets upstart

Governments as well as upstart men, they did nothing to remedy this condition, and adopted a haughty attitude towards the originally quite reasonable representations of the Sudeten leaders.

Asch, the home-town of Conrad Henlein, was a good point from which to begin an inspection of the territory of his followers. Its situation was in itself an example of the artificiality of the separation of these people of German stock from their kinsmen across the frontier, for it stood at that time in the middle of a salient of Czecho-Slovak territory, only about three miles wide, which penetrated into Germany for a depth of over ten miles.

Asch is a textile town of 25,000 inhabitants, with small factories making knitted articles and gloves, whose business had wilted away, not only in the general economic slump but by reason of the fact that United States buyers extended their general boycott of German goods to the Sudeten Germans also. Yet, before the war, the place had been so prosperous that in 1914, Gustav Geipel, one of its citizens, bequeathed £320,000 and twenty-five houses to the municipality, whose streets he had previously repaved at his own expense. In this thoroughly German town it was characteristic of the Czech administration that in May, 1938, out of its 100 policemen, only 4 were German and 96 were Czechs.

Conrad Henlein's home in Asch is a small, modern, three-storied, grey stucco house in the Zeppelinstrasse, and he also had a party office in the Masarykstrasse. No more suitable base for conducting Nationalist agitation with the encouragement of the German Government could be imagined, for it was quite easy, I was told by the citizens, to slip unseen across the frontier, a mile or so away, and from there to communicate with Berlin without any interference from the Czech authorities.

So great was the convenience of Asch as a back-door into Germany that Dr. Benes himself had used it in 1915 when he escaped from Austria-Hungary during the war

on his way to America for the purpose of starting his campaign for Czecho-Slovak independence. I was taken to see a stone memorial that had been set up in the fields to mark the spot where he passed over the border to Schönwald, the nearest German village. His guide was a Czech Customs official named Prohaska, who, after the establishment of the Czecho-Slovak Republic, had been rewarded by the Government with a pension.

From here stretches north-eastward the line of the Erzgebirge, then forming the border between Germany and Czecho-Slovakia. The advantage of these heights as a strategic frontier had been the predominant factor in determining the inclusion of the Sudeten German area in Czecho-Slovakia. Though their name means "ore mountains," they are actually no more than grassy, wooded downs, some 3,000 feet high, in whose valleys manufacturing villages stretch sometimes for miles beside the streams.

The poverty of such places was obvious at a glance. All of them had the look of having seen better days. Though the houses were well-built, their fronts were shabby, weather-stained and neglected. The streets were badly paved. Knowing what can be done with German labour-power, as has been amply demonstrated in the Third Reich, one could not help feeling that if the Czech Government had been as good at organization as it was at propaganda, it could have developed its 3½ million Germans into a prosperous and contented element of the nation.

This part of the Egerland largely specializes in the manufacture of musical instruments, from organ-pipes to concertinas. The Egerlanders are very fond of music. People from towns like Graslitz and Pressnitz, where there is a famous music academy, are to be found in orchestras all over the world. The foreign market for this industry had almost disappeared, and in many towns the men were

reduced to doing the housework while the women kept their families by working in such textile and knitting factories as were still running.

Since the Czech Government refused to allow males liable for military duty to leave the country, it was impossible for the younger generation to improve its lot by emigration, and the only employment which they could obtain from the Czechs was that of common labourers, with no prospect of improving their position. The conviction that their Czech rulers intended to keep them as hewers of wood and drawers of water helped to increase the bitterness of their economic depression.

Of recent years, a new "Defence of the Realm Act" had added to their troubles. By this, the Czech Government had taken powers to deport members of minority populations living on the frontiers, and many Sudeten farmers had been arbitrarily moved inland.

Similar defensive precautions had led to the shifting of factories of any importance to national defence. At Rothau I saw a dismantled ironworks, which had formerly given employment to the whole village. The removal of this concern to the interior of the country had reduced the local population to poverty. I was told that the relief they received amounted to the equivalent of only half a crown a week per family, with the result that the little stucco houses along the valley, which in earlier times had been bought out of the savings of their occupiers, were all pledged to money-lenders.

In Neudek I happened to arrive on the day of what was known as the "Beggars' Market." From 100 to 150 villagers from the surrounding hills used to come down each week to the market-place, trying to raise a few coppers by selling their clothing or furniture. What made these people more resentful of their hard lot was the fact that they had only to walk to the top of the nearest hill in order to see, stretched out before their eyes to the northward,

the territory of Nazi Germany, where unemployment had almost entirely disappeared, and where State organizations provided regular wages, good housing, holiday-camps and organized leisure for the workers.

I paid two visits to Czecho-Slovakia during the early part of 1938, in March and in May. There are few cities in Europe so attractive as Prague in spring.

The romance of the Middle Ages still lingers in the crooked, colonnaded streets of the old town; in the dim, vaulted, stone-built rooms of the ancient beer-shops where drinking and dancing go on at night; and in the rambling palaces—of which the British Legation occupied one of the most attractive—that cling to the sides of the steep hill crowned by the huge Hradčany Castle, the centre of much of the turbulent Central European history of the Middle Ages.

In its modern activities, too, Prague is lively and attractive. Few capitals of Europe have a more interesting street-scene than the long St. Wenceslas Square at noon, with its broad pavements lined with peasant-women in country dress selling brightly-coloured embroideries; with kiosks offering the newspapers of the whole of Europe, and crowded restaurants and cafés, of which the terrace in front of the Ambassador Hotel is the most popular meeting-place in the city.

Excellent food is provided in this attractive capital, whether one takes it in some quaint and difficult-to-find little seventeenth-century eating-house; in a terraced garden-restaurant on the banks of the Moldava, or in one of the many excellent establishments in the modern part of the city. Prague has a convenient custom by which the grocers' shops serve also as bars—offering at the same time the most seductive collection of *hors-d'œuvre* and sandwiches. One of these called Lippert's, in the Graben, the principal shopping street, is, just before lunch, a sort of social rendezvous where people meet their friends while

drinking vodka or *slivovitz* out of quaint little Bohemian glasses.

From the moment that the Anschluss between Austria and Germany was an accomplished fact, the Sudeten problem in Czecho-Slovakia began to grow more urgent and critical.

With German troops in Vienna, the occupation of the Sudetenland could be carried out not only from the North and West, but from the South also. By thrusting simultaneously northwards from Vienna and southwards from Breslau, the German Army would be able to cut Czecho-Slovakia in two at its narrowest point, where the distance across the neck of the country from one frontier to another was under 150 miles. The German forces, having thus seized Czecho-Slovakia by the throat, would be able to advance on Prague from the East, reducing in this way to a minimum the necessity for carrying on military operations in the Sudeten territory itself.

I heard in the early spring of 1938 that the General Staff, working out the details of such an operation, had decided that it could be performed with fifteen divisions, and would be over in a week. Should other European Powers intervene, the regular troops could be shifted to whatever frontier of Germany was threatened, leaving Czecho-Slovakia to be held down by Storm Troopers or S.S. Guards.

At that time, however, the German plans had not yet reached the length of the immediate annexation of the Sudeten territory to the Reich. What was intended was an operation in two stages—first, to secure local autonomy for the Sudetens within the Czecho-Slovak Republic, and, later on, by a plebiscite or a resolution of the Sudeten governing body, to bring about their subsequent incorporation.

One of the highest authorities in Germany assured me

shortly after the Anschluss that if the Czech Government conceded full autonomy to the Sudetens there would be no annexation.

But the Czechs were full of self-confidence—to their own ultimate undoing. Their newspapers systematically misled them as to the attitude of the outside world. They were assured that Russia, France and Britain would rush to their rescue in the hour of danger, and maps were published to illustrate the fact that by air France was eighty minutes, and Russia only forty minutes, distant from Czecho-Slovakian territory.

A week before the Anschluss, President Benes gave an interview to a London Sunday newspaper in which he declared that federal autonomy for the Sudetens was impossible. He also announced that the treatment of minorities was a subject which the Czech Government would never discuss with any foreign Power, and added that Czecho-Slovakia would defend its territorial integrity if necessary by force. This was a defiant reply to Herr Hitler's Reichstag speech of February 20, proclaiming Germany's active interest in the "ten million Germans living in two States adjoining our frontiers," and it illustrates that stubbornness of soul which hastened the day when Czecho-Slovakia came under the German heel.

On May 20, 1919, in a memorandum which he submitted to the Peace Conference in Paris, Dr. Benes had written that the intention of his Government was "to give the Germans in Bohemia the same rights as the Czecho-Slovaks. The German tongue will be the second national language and no oppressive measures will be taken against the German population." He added: "Their regime would resemble that of Switzerland."

Yet in his interview on the eve of the Anschluss, he brushed the example of Switzerland aside, stating that it represented a country which had evolved in five centuries,

while Czecho-Slovakia had only twenty years behind her. He also objected that the Sudeten Germans were split up into six "islands" along the frontier over a distance of about 1,250 miles.

At the beginning of 1938, the Sudeten Germans themselves were not aiming at detachment from Czecho-Slovakia. Their leader, Conrad Henlein, in the speech which he made at a Congress of the Sudeten German Party at Karlsbad in April, 1938, laid down the Sudeten demands to the Czech Government in a programme of eight points. These were:

1. Equality of rights and standing between the German and Czech elements of the State.
2. Recognition of the Sudetens as a corporation entitled to defend their equality.
3. Demarcation and recognition of the German-inhabited areas.
4. Self-administration within these German areas in all public activities in so far as the interests and affairs of the German population were concerned.
5. Protective legislation for members of racial groups living outside the areas in which their race predominated.
6. Repair of the injustices imposed upon the Sudetens since 1918, and reparation for damage suffered.
7. Recognition and fulfilment of the principle: German officials for German areas.
8. Full liberty for the maintenance of German institutions and of a German viewpoint.

There was nothing in this programme foreshadowing secession. Rather did it betoken the aspiration on the part of the Sudetens to remain, under autonomous conditions, a constituent part of the Czecho-Slovak Republic. Herr Henlein defined it as the purpose of his party's

demands that they should lead "to a peaceful development in the Czecho-Slovak State."

The determination of the rulers of Nazi Germany to bring the Sudetens ultimately into the Reich would have been unaffected by any concessions. But a less obstinate resistance on the part of the Czechs would have probably postponed that development for some time, and would have enabled it to take place by more gradual and peaceful methods than those pursued in September, 1938.

CHAPTER XII

EARLY STAGES OF THE CZECH CRISIS

CLEVERNESS is the outstanding quality of Dr. Benes, the former President of Czecho-Slovakia. He excelled at diplomatic intrigue. It was his accomplishment in this respect which enabled him to bluff and delude the over-worked and weary peacemakers in Paris into expanding the seven million Czechs, whom he originally represented, into a composite and artificial nation of fifteen millions for which he invented the name of Czecho-Slovakia—an appellation as artificial as would be the title "Anglo-Holland."

Dr. Benes is a small man, with an earnest manner and a habit of leaning forward with his head slightly on one side to fix his gaze upon the person to whom he is talking. His quiet voice and unflinching fluency in many languages made him a most convincing person to meet.

I remember having tea alone with him on October 31, 1934, in his handsome modern villa at No. 43, Na Satorce, the best of the residential parks around Prague. Though the Nazi regime was not then two years in power, he had made up his mind that the great factor in Europe was Germany, but said, "Since Hitler took office my task has become much easier, for any war that starts will at once become a general European one, and I shall be on the side of the Great Powers." He believed that the blockade alone would defeat Germany.

Dr. Benes told me that Hitler had already three times offered him a ten-year pact of non-aggression on the

same lines as that between Germany and Poland. He had refused to enter into any individual treaty, though he would have signed a universal one. He seemed to rely implicitly upon France and Britain to keep the Nazi Government from annexing Austria. "There will be peace on the Danube so long as there is peace on the Rhine," was one of his statements.

Speaking of the Sudeten minority in Czecho-Slovakia, the Czech Foreign Minister, as he then was, declared that the million artisans among them were so anti-Nazi that he had to censor their newspapers to suppress over-violent abuse of Germany. "It is the 500,000 bourgeois Sudetens who are pro-German and dangerous," he said.

Dr. Benes's scope as an international politician extended much beyond the limits of his own country. He belonged to that group of politicians who found in the League of Nations a sphere of influence far wider than the importance of the States they represented there would otherwise have given them. Together with Titulescu, Madariaga, Vasconcellos, Politis and Litvinoff—a galaxy of former League "stars" whose names have almost been forgotten with the effacement of the vaporous institution amid whose misty vagueness they shone so brightly—Benes was one of the leading members of a "Geneva International" of minor statesmen which exercised a disproportionate preponderance in European affairs. It was one of his ambitions to become Secretary-General of the League of Nations, so that his zest for international wire-pulling might have wider scope.

Instead of doing his best to make a success of the strangely compounded European country that he had been the principal means of bringing into existence, Dr. Benes devoted himself to the game of European politics. He was one of the founders of the Little Entente which united Czecho-Slovakia with Rumania and Jugoslavia in the task of keeping a pistol permanently pointed at the head of Hungary, whom they had all three plundered. He

made alliances with France and Soviet Russia. He threatened to invade Austria if she ventured to restore the Habsburg dynasty.

It is easy to understand why Benes played this active rôle in foreign affairs. His personal prestige was proportionate to the extent to which he would make his small country a factor in Central European politics, and its strategic position in the heart of the Continent gave to it, in fact, an international importance which it would otherwise have lacked. There is an old diplomatic saying that the Power which controls Bohemia controls Europe, and Czecho-Slovakia was an important bastion of that hegemony which France exercised in Europe during the first fifteen years after the war. The Czech Army had been equipped and trained by France, and right up to the time of the crisis of September, 1938, a French Military Mission was attached to Czech headquarters.

Confidence in the indispensability of Czecho-Slovakia as an outpost against Germany may well have led Dr. Benes to the conviction that his country would never be left to face German pressure alone, and that he could therefore afford to neglect the claims of the German minority, even after these became more insistent as a result of the success of the Nazi regime next-door.

From international lobbying the newly-elected President of Czecho-Slovakia was recalled to his country's affairs by the Anschluss of March, 1938. The actual event was not so much a surprise as the revelation which it brought of the reluctance—in fact, the refusal—of Britain and France to intervene in the Central European situation. It began to look as if highly-armed and aggressive Germany, supported by her equally highly-armed and docile ally Italy, were going to obtain undisputed control of the destinies of this part of the Continent.

The anxieties aroused in the Czech Government by this development were not greatly diminished by the order

given to the German troops in Austria not to approach within ten miles of the Czech border, or by Marshal Goering's assurance that no operations were contemplated against that State. The French Premier, M. Léon Blum, did, indeed, give the Czech Minister in Paris, on the day after the Anschluss, the assurance that France would support Czecho-Slovakia by force of arms if necessary. But the Popular Front Government was evidence rather of the disunion than of the solidarity of the French nation, and before the end of the month the attitude of Great Britain was defined in a speech by Mr. Chamberlain, who declared that the British Government would not pledge itself automatically to take up arms if the integrity of Czecho-Slovakia were violated, though he went on to say that if war broke out it might spread even without such formal engagements.

The foundations upon which Dr. Benes had built Czecho-Slovakia were clearly crumbling, and he sought for some means of consolidating them. It is characteristic of clever men that they sometimes over-reach themselves. This happened in the case of Dr. Benes.

The device upon which he decided was to create a sudden crisis in which Czech independence should seem to be directly threatened. He hoped that this emergency would startle the British and French Governments into making public declarations of solidarity with Czecho-Slovakia, from which it would afterwards be impossible for them to retreat.

Accordingly, on Saturday, May 21, by agreement between himself, M. Matchnik, Czech Minister of Defence, and General Krejci, Chief of the General Staff, one hundred thousand Czech reservists were called up and at once added to the troops already stationed on the German frontier. At the same time the alarm was raised that German forces were advancing against Czecho-Slovakia. In the absence of all supporting evidence, it can only be concluded that

this pretext was an invention either on the part of the Czech Government or of someone who duped them.

The partial mobilization was undertaken without the knowledge of the rest of the Cabinet. The other Czech Ministers heard of it only in the early hours of the morning of May 21, when the summonses to the reservists had already been issued. That it took them by surprise is indicated by the fact that the Foreign Minister, M. Krofta, telephoned to the German Minister in Prague at nine o'clock to say that he had only just been informed of the measure and that he hoped it would not be interpreted in Berlin as a hostile act.

The Prime Minister himself, Dr. Hodza, was indignant that he had not been consulted, for, under the Czech Constitution, mobilization required the consent of the whole Cabinet.

The Premier immediately offered his resignation to President Benes, who refused it on the ground that the recall of reservists was not mobilization, but only a training measure within the scope of the authority of the Minister of Defence.

To settle this internal crisis, all the Czech Ministers were invited on that Saturday afternoon to meet the President at the Hradcany Palace. In order to conceal the strained position that had arisen they were instructed to bring their wives, so that the meeting might have the air of an official tea-party. At the Cabinet council then held the protests of the more moderate Ministers were pacified.

The war-scare failed to produce its hoped-for effect. The British and French Governments instructed their representatives in Berlin to inquire whether the alleged troop movements towards the Czech frontier were taking place, but no formal commitment in the form of a warning to Germany or a public pledge to Czecho-Slovakia was made. Sir Nevile Henderson, the British Ambassador, was assured that no military concentration had occurred.

The British Military Attaché in Berlin, who made a tour in the neighbourhood of the Czech frontier, could find no signs of abnormal measures there.

Sir Neville Henderson saw Herr von Ribbentrop twice on the following day, and received further denials of any German move against the Czechs. Since the transport of a single division takes up fourteen miles of road, it is obvious that an army such as the Czechs declared was bearing down upon them could not have existed without the fact being common knowledge.

Some alarm was caused by preparations by certain members of the British Embassy in Berlin to send their families home. It was rumoured that the Foreign Minister had used such violent language to the British Ambassador as to suggest that the Germans might, in fact, be contemplating war. Exaggerated versions of both these incidents got into circulation. The evacuation was a limited and private one due to the initiative of the people concerned. It attracted attention only because the German Railways were asked to provide a special coach.

This brief week-end crisis in May, 1938, might have been forgotten if the Czech Press and anti-German newspapers in other countries had not begun to proclaim that the German Government had backed down in alarm before the firm front displayed by Czecho-Slovakia and her British and French friends. It was maintained that all arrangements for invasion had been made, but that they had been called off because of the Czech show of resistance.

For a time President Benes had the satisfaction of seeing Czech prestige exalted by this turn of events, but it was a costly success, for Hitler's indignation at the suggestion that he had received a check determined him to bring about the annexation of the Sudeten Germans, even at the cost of war, before the autumn of 1938 was over.

From that moment, preparations for the invasion of Czecho-Slovakia did, in fact, begin. The Reich had many

advantages for carrying these out. Her Sudeten friends in Czecho-Slovakia were in a position to reveal many military secrets.

All through the summer, 200 German battalions were exercised at attacking model fortified positions, exactly duplicating the Czech frontier defences. The German Air Force marked out in its own country an area corresponding to Czecho-Slovakia. Upon this tract of territory, bombing targets were set up in situations corresponding to those of the thirty-four Czech military aerodromes, the existence of some of which was supposed to be secret, but whose location was known to the German Intelligence Service. A thousand pilots were trained in finding these objectives by day or night under all weather conditions.

German aircraft-factories started three daily shifts, so that by September they were producing, as I was told by one of the highest Generals in the Air Force, a thousand machines a month.

At the same time, Hitler set himself to block any attempt by the French Army to invade Germany as a diversion in favour of Czecho-Slovakia. Since the re-occupation of the Rhineland two years before, a certain amount of fortification work had been carried out along the heights of the Black Forest. The Fuhrer now determined that during the summer he would create along the whole of the Western frontier of Germany defences as formidable as the Maginot Line facing it.

Practically the entire Labour Service, numbering at any given time about 150,000 men, were turned on to the rougher work involved, while skilled artisans from all over Germany were drafted into the Rhineland, largely paralysing the more peaceful industries from which they were drawn. At one time 400,000 men toiled on this Siegfried Line, with shifts working by floodlight through the night.

One of his intimates related to me that the Fuhrer had shut himself up for a fortnight with a series of works on the art of fortification, together with all the information with which the German General Staff could supply him on the design of the Maginot Line.

He had come to the conclusion that the French system had the defect of keeping an overlarge number of the garrison inactive underground in proportion to the few actually serving the batteries on the surface. The principle which he adopted for the Siegfried Line, I was told, was that of successive lines of concrete bomb-and-shell-proof shelters, each containing fourteen men. During the preliminary stage of bombardment, these would remain under cover. When the enemy's tanks and armoured forces advanced they would emerge, to man prepared positions.

German authorities asserted that at the end of 1938 they possessed 4,700 anti-tank guns, a greater number than was owned by the armies of Britain, France and Italy together. Such defences, supported by modern devices in the form of tank-traps, would, it was believed, make the Siegfried Line impregnable, for the cost of forcing it would be too high for any army to undertake.

The war-scare in May, which furnished the pretext for all these military preparations, had also the effect of intensifying the tension between Germans and Czechs in Czecho-Slovakia itself. As the Sudetens live in a frontier-zone, they had to endure considerable inconvenience from the defensive dispositions of the Czech Army. The horses and carts of German farmers were commandeered for the use of the military, so that they were not able to till their fields, or carry their supplies of milk into the towns. Many of them were warned off their own land altogether, on the pretext that military works were being erected there. The Prague newspapers

of May 28 contained a menacing Government notice reading:

The population is warned not to approach military objects or outposts, so as to avoid injury or accident.

Throughout the Sudeten area, road and railway-bridges were mined, with fuses laid ready. Trees along the highways had been felled to lie across the road as barricades. Barriers of farm-carts and threshing-machines formed additional obstructions to traffic. Yet these preparations would have been so ineffective to stop a modern army that the Sudetens believed that their purpose was only to annoy the German minority, at whose expense they were made.

Greater resentment still was caused by the conduct of the Czech troops in the Sudeten area, who behaved as aggressively as if they were in some newly-conquered territory, snatching Sudeten Party badges from the civilians, spitting on them, and beating or arresting townspeople whom they met in the streets after dark.

The worst of these incidents occurred on May 21, when two middle-aged Sudetens, riding on a motor-bicycle in the small hours of the morning, passed the gate of the barracks in the town of Eger and were shot dead from behind by a military policeman, on the pretext that they had not obeyed his order to halt, which, as their machine was accelerating to climb a hill at the time, they may not have heard. There were about thirty-five serious and two hundred minor occurrences in which Sudetens suffered violence.

Having asked at the Party Offices in Prague for an interview to be arranged for me with Conrad Henlein, the Sudeten leader, I was told that he would attend the funeral of the two shot motor-cyclists in Eger on May 25, and would like me to take lunch with him afterwards.

Early that morning I motored out the 150 miles from

Prague and found the roads in the Egerland full of its German population on its way to the funeral. All the younger men wore the white stockings which were the adopted badge of the German minority. The Czech police in normal times showed such resentment of these garments that they beat up youths who ventured to appear in them. On this occasion, however, as a result of an appeal from the leaders of the German minority, the Czech authorities had almost evacuated the district for the day, and 60,000 German men and women from the neighbourhood around gathered at Eger in the long, irregularly-shaped market-square, surrounded by the carved and gabled fronts of sixteenth-century houses.

The burial of the two men shot by the Czech sentry was a demonstration of the dour, determined spirit, like that of the Scottish Covenanters, which animated the Sudetens. From a high, black-draped platform, beside which cressets mounted on tall pylons burned with a smoky flame, Henlein, Frank and other Sudeten leaders made speeches over the coffins.

The discipline and silence of this mass-demonstration was evidence of the deep feeling of the German minority. Except for the sobbing of the women, and the solemn voices of the speakers proclaiming the two dead peasants as martyrs of the German cause, the whole life of the town was still. Once only did a cheer break from the dense crowd when the Military and Naval Attachés of the German Legation in Prague, wearing uniform, stepped forward to lay wreaths upon the coffins in the name of the "*Führer und Reichskanzler*."

Conrad Henlein is a man who makes a strong impression of sincerity. His sturdy frame and healthy complexion he owes to a youth spent as a gymnastic instructor. Spectacles lend an academic expression to his solemn, strong-jawed face.

After the simple luncheon that I had with him and

two members of his staff in an upstairs room of the Hotel Victoria, which was the local headquarters of the Sudeten Party, he talked for an hour about the claims of the German minority under his leadership. His tone and manner were reasonable, and I felt that he was a man with whom the Czech Government could, if it wished, reach an understanding. He had made a similar impression on his visit a week before to London where, among other prominent people, he had been received by Mr. Winston Churchill and Sir Robert Vansittart.

Herr Henlein began by saying that the political inflammation in Czecho-Slovakia was poisoning the whole of Central Europe, and that, if it were not cured, it would end by infecting the whole continent.

"What I offer to the Czechs," he said, "is the loyal co-operation of the German section of this artificially created state. In return I ask for full local autonomy in all districts where the majority of the population is German by race.

"If this were granted, the present national frontiers of Czecho-Slovakia would remain unchanged, and the Central Government would keep its authority over all matters that are the concern of the nation as a whole."

At this time there had been no direct German intervention in the Sudeten affair. Henlein had full authority in the movement. From what he said to me in May, it is clear that, if the Czech Government had had the sense to compromise then, it could have maintained the national frontiers intact. In view of the determination of the Nazi Government, the ultimate union of the Sudetens with the Reich was doubtless inevitable. But it would have been better for Europe that this should come about by gradual evolution rather than by the threat of war which accomplished it.

In the talk I had with him at Eger, Herr Henlein went on to say that there were three possible solutions of the

Sudeten problem. The first was that the Czech Government should give the German minority full local autonomy in such matters as social services, education and police. If this were refused, the Sudetens would press for the plebiscite which had been refused to them at the time of the Peace Treaty. The issue of that, he declared, would be a 98 per cent. majority in favour of joining with Germany.

If neither of these two solutions were conceded, there still remained a third. It was that one day Germany would take over the Sudetens by direct action.

However much one disliked the look of this Sudeten situation, it was impossible to quarrel with Herr Henlein's analysis of it.

"Czecho-Slovakia is not a homogeneous state," he said, "but one made up of a number of nationalities. It was brought into existence to be a barrier to German expansion, and the Czechs, although forming only 50 per cent. of the total population, have an exaggerated idea that it is their privilege and duty to dominate the other nationalities, among which the Germans alone number half as many as themselves.

"You have only got to look at the map," he went on, "to see that this artificially formed state is like a fist thrust into the side of Germany. That fact, combined with the oppression of the German minority here, makes the present state of affairs impossible. I am doing my best to find a solution for it by negotiations that I have just begun with the Czech Government, though I have not much hope of success.

"The Czechs keep on proposing only superficial concessions instead of radical revision. In the end this may lead to a war which would ruin Europe so completely that the survivors would have no choice except to go and beg for bananas in Africa."

I had told the Party officials in Prague that I wanted this interview with Herr Henlein, and my visit to him had

been arranged on that understanding. It came as a considerable surprise therefore to see in the Prague newspapers, two days later, a statement issued by the Sudeten Propaganda Bureau that my reproduction of their Leader's words was "an unauthorized version of a private conversation."

This was not only a *démenti* but an accusation. I went to the Party Offices to demand a withdrawal, calling as witnesses of my good faith the two officials who had arranged the interview and been present when it took place. I also sent a strong telegram of protest to Herr Henlein, who was at his home in Asch.

There was a good deal of resistance to my request. I learned that the Czech Government had been infuriated by Herr Henlein's suggestion that Germany might invade Czecho-Slovakia. Berlin also had sent a strong rebuke, based, no doubt, upon the untimeliness rather than the inaccuracy of his forecast.

In following up the matter I got a curious insight into the inner workings of the Sudeten Party. From a source in its secrets I learned that Herr Henlein had, indeed, been under the impression that our conversation was not for publication, and therefore had not hesitated to refer to the possibility of German intervention. This impression had been derived, not from me, but from one of the members of his own staff who had arranged the interview.

I was told that the reason for this misleading him was that one section of the Party was less moderate than its leader. Some of the younger men hoped for big jobs if the Sudetens were joined with Germany, whereas local autonomy would offer them no prospects of personal advancement. They accordingly desired the breakdown of the negotiations which Henlein had begun with Dr. Hodza, the Czech Prime Minister. They thought that this might be achieved if their chief were to make threatening references to Czecho-Slovakia in a foreign newspaper.

In order to bring this about, he had been told that his statement to me would not be reported.

Much as I regretted the fact that Herr Henlein had been placed under a misapprehension, I could not allow this intrigue to be concealed at the expense of my journalistic reputation. I consequently prepared a written retraction of the denial of the interview, to which I requested the Sudeten Headquarters to obtain Herr Henlein's signature. They declared that this was impossible.

I then said I would go to Herr Henlein himself. His subordinates asserted that he was so full of wrath that he would not see me, but eventually I succeeded in getting access to him for a second time at Eger, where, after some discussion, he signed my draft rectification containing the words: "I wish to put it on record that I cast no doubt upon the genuineness of the reproduction of our conversation which appeared in the form of an interview in *The Daily Mail* on May 26. I confirm that, following upon a communication made to you by my staff, you were entitled to the assumption that I would give you an interview."

Herr Henlein acted quite fairly in a predicament which was awkward for himself, and he handed me the signed letter with the words: "It is neither your fault nor mine that this misunderstanding has arisen."

Three months later, in September, I happened to sit next to him at a tea-party given by Herr Hitler during the Party Congress at Nuremberg, and was glad to find that he bore no ill-will for the trouble which he said this incident had caused him.

Although, in the earlier part of 1938, the Sudetens were not demanding annexation to Germany, that development continued to become inevitable as a result of the failure of the Czech Government to put an end to the crisis, and also of the stern though still secret determination

of Adolf Hitler to bring the Sudeten Germans into the Reich before the winter.

It was once more the uncompromising attitude of President Benes which prevented the Czech Ministers from going further along the path of agreement with the Sudetens. Some of his Cabinet recognized the danger of resisting the claims of the German minority. M. Krofta remarked to a foreign diplomat, who repeated his words to me, that he could see that Czecho-Slovakia would again become what it had been as the Kingdom of Bohemia—a subordinate state within the orbit of the German Reich. That prophecy is now fulfilled.

Dr. Hodza, the Prime Minister, told me on June 6 that he was convinced of the necessity of "the reconstruction of Czecho-Slovakia," and produced a large folder containing forty or fifty typewritten sheets as the draft of a new "Minority Statute" by which the Czech Government proposed to conciliate dissatisfied subject-races of the Republic.

All such proposals on their part were made ineffective by excess of detail, and reservations which the Sudetens, who had long lost faith in Czech reliability, regarded as loopholes for evasion.

Frank and full acceptance of the Sudeten demands might have saved Europe from the crisis of the autumn, and would certainly have been cheaper for Czecho-Slovakia than the price she paid for her procrastination. In September the Czechs would gladly have accepted all the conditions of Henlein's Karlsbad speech of April, but it was then too late.

Throughout the summer months, the world watched the spark creeping steadily nearer to the powder-barrel. In July, Herr Hitler sent his aide-de-camp, Captain Wiedemann, to London, where he obtained an interview with Lord Halifax and urged the British Government to recommend the Czechs to make concessions. During the Royal visit to Paris in that same month, the British

Foreign Secretary agreed with the French Premier and Foreign Minister that they should advise President Benes to show himself more reasonable.

At this time the most favoured solution was one for the creation of three local Diets, or legislatures, in Czecho-Slovakia, representing respectively the Czechs, Slovaks and Germans.

As the deadlock continued, the British Government decided to send Lord Runciman to Prague as an arbitrator between the conflicting parties. After eight weeks of investigation on the spot, he came to two conclusions—first, that the hostility between Czechs and Germans was too acute for them to live together in the same national community, and, secondly, that the man principally responsible for bringing the Sudeten question to its critical condition was Dr. Benes.

Throughout this period the Czech and Sudeten leaders had continued to exchange schemes and memoranda. As late as the end of July, Herr Henlein again declared that, if the German minority were given complete autonomy, it would be content to leave national defence and foreign affairs in the hands of the Czech Government. "We do not ask," he said, "to be joined up with Germany, and I am not demanding a plebiscite. We are not hostile to the Czecho-Slovak State, but only to its present oppressive form of Government, which treats us like Africans subject to alien overseers."

But by this time the fate of the Sudetens was no longer in Herr Henlein's hands. While he sat debating the Czech Government's proposals with his advisers in his humble Party office at Eger, Herr Hitler, pacing up and down the terrace at Berchtesgaden, was making other plans.

On August 21, Admiral Horthy, the Regent of Hungary, arrived in Berlin on a State visit, and was received with even more imposing ceremonial than had been prepared

for the Duce twelve months earlier. It was not any special sympathy for Hungary that led Herr Hitler to parade before his visitor the military, naval and aerial might of Germany. Those two States have no ideological ties. The Nazi mind is inclined to regard as reactionary the semi-aristocratic regime which governs Hungary under the ægis of the symbolic but ownerless Crown of St. Stephen. And the Nazi philosophy was so little favoured in Hungary that Admiral Horthy's Government had recently sentenced the leader of the small Hungarian Nazi movement, Szallásy, to a long term of imprisonment.

The Hungarian Regent's welcome was in striking contrast to the cold and almost contemptuous treatment with which the Hungarian Premier and the Foreign Minister, Daranyi and Kanya, had been received when they visited Berlin in 1937. On that occasion, M. Daranyi is said to have retorted to a remark made to him by Dr. Goebbels, "You forget that you are not talking to a German *Gauleiter* but to the Premier of the Kingdom of Hungary."

The attitude of the Nazi Government had changed because Herr Hitler was about to offer to Hungary the opportunity of participating in his scheme for bringing the Sudetens within the Reich. If this enterprise should involve the use of force, the Führer wished the newly-revived Hungarian Army to co-operate with the German advance by occupying the whole of Slovakia. Before the war this had been Hungarian territory, and within it lived three-quarters of a million Hungarians who had suffered from Czech oppression even more than the Sudetens themselves.

Admiral Horthy, however, is a cautious and cool-headed statesman. When the Führer revealed his plans, the Regent replied that before committing his country, he would want to know what action was likely to be taken by the British and French Governments. These reservations were not well received. They implied a doubt as to the Führer's capacity for forcing through his will. The

next time that Herr Hitler made contact with Hungary on this subject, during the September crisis, it was the new Hungarian Premier, Dr. Imrédy, whom he invited to visit him at Berchtesgaden, though the Regent himself was in Germany at the time, as the guest of Marshal Goering.

Evidence of the approach of a crisis in Central Europe was supplied in August by the recall of 750,000 German reservists on the pretext of manœuvres, together with the requisitioning of motor-vehicles, the cancellation of military leave and the calling-up of doctors and nurses throughout the country.

As the Führer's determination to force a solution of the Sudeten problem thus became clearer, certain influential people in Germany began to get alarmed. They thought it would lead to a European war. Among them were generals of high rank, who maintained that Germany's stocks of raw materials would be exhausted after six months' fighting. During the summer of 1938, several attempts were made to put the brake on Germany's Sudeten policy. By indirect means, the request was even conveyed to the British Government that it should make a positive declaration of its resolve to fight, if necessary, in defence of Czech territory. It was thought that a pronouncement of this kind might restrain the Führer from taking a course which its German critics expected to prove fatal for their country.

A letter was accordingly written and sent to Germany by a highly-placed but unofficial British politician, asserting that he had full reason to believe that England would go to war if Czecho-Slovakia were molested. It was presumably shown to the Führer as intended, but if so, failed to dissuade him from pushing his demands against Czecho-Slovakia to the limit.

Nor was any greater effect produced by the speech on August 27 in which Sir John Simon, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, repeated the statement already made by

Mr. Neville Chamberlain on March 24, to the effect that though Britain would not promise to take up arms automatically if the integrity of Czecho-Slovakia were violated, the pressure of events might well prove even stronger than the formal announcement of such an intention.

Considering these public declarations, Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop came to the conclusion that they were a smoke-screen of words to hide political irresolution and military weakness. Their own designs were based on firmer foundations. The period of power-politics in Europe had begun.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SUDETEN STORM BREAKS

WHEN the tenth annual Nazi Conference opened at Nuremberg on September 4, Europe was already in a state of high tension about the Czecho-Slovak question. It was felt that this week of celebrations, which is one long parade of Nazi power, would not pass without the public proclamation of Hitler's intention to obtain satisfaction for the Sudeten demands.

On the day the Conference began, M. Daladier, the French Premier, announced that two classes of the French Army Reserve had been recalled, together with all the reservists of the Air Force, and that the Maginot Line had been fully manned. It looked as if Europe were beginning to go to "battle-stations." Yet that night, in the Opera House in Nuremberg, I saw the whole of the Government of the Third Reich listening for five hours on end to a performance of the *Meistersinger*, which is a standing prelude to the annual Congress.

The members of a totalitarian Government escape many of the worries that beset their "opposite numbers" in democratic States. They have no Parliamentary questions to answer; no Press criticism to face; only occasional set speeches to deliver; and they consequently possess reserves of leisure and energy denied to the harassed Ministers of more liberal regimes. It was characteristic that the first public oration delivered by the Führer at Nuremberg in this time of crisis should be a long dissertation on the

application of Nazi philosophy to architecture, music, art and literature.

It is, however, a well-tried method of Herr Hitler's political technique to content himself with oracular pronouncements while a situation in which he is interested steadily grows more critical, and then, suddenly abandoning this attitude of detachment, to declare that his patience is exhausted, after which he proceeds to impose his own solution by effective methods bearing every mark of long and deliberate preparation.

Such a moment was now approaching. His intimate advisers, Dr. Goebbels and Herr Rudolf Hess, were urging the advantages of direct action. Herr von Ribbentrop held the view that France could not, and England would not, fight to defend Czecho-Slovakia against German pressure.

At the outset of the Nuremberg Conference, encouragement was given to this view by the unexpected appearance of a leading article in *The Times* which bluntly suggested that the Czech Government might be well advised to allow the Sudetens to join up with Germany.

The origin of this suggestion has remained mysterious. In journalistic circles closely connected with *The Times* responsibility for it was attributed to the individual leader-writer himself. In Germany, however, it was regarded as a *ballon d'essai* launched by the British Government, though the Foreign Office expressly disclaimed any connection with the proposal. What *The Times* wrote was:

It can only be inferred that the Germans are going beyond the mere removal of disabilities, and do not find themselves at ease within the Czechoslovak Republic. In that case, it might be worth while for the Czechoslovak Government to consider whether they should exclude altogether the project, which has found favour in some quarters, of making Czecho-slovakia a more homogeneous State by the secession of that fringe of alien populations who are contiguous to the nation

with which they are united by race. In any case, the wishes of the population concerned would seem to be a decisively important element in any solution that can hope to be regarded as permanent, and the advantages to Czechoslovakia of becoming a homogeneous State might conceivably outweigh the obvious disadvantages of losing the Sudeten German districts of the borderland.

Those who knew something of the attempts that had been made by the German General Staff during the summer to discourage "strong-arm" methods against Czechoslovakia, saw in Herr Hitler's first political proclamation to the Party Congress an indication that these had completely failed. His opening address, was, as usual, read to an audience of 50,000 Party members by Herr Wagner, the Provincial Administrator of Bavaria, in the great Congress Hall. In this, Herr Hitler drew a comparison between the rise of Germany under his own leadership and the recovery of Prussia after her defeat by Napoleon. He declared that some of his critics who praised the virtues of *Preussentum* had refused to see in him a common soldier "who is the embodiment of Prussianism."

This remark was doubtless intended as a public rebuke to those German generals who had urged the risks of an aggressive policy in the Czecho-Slovak affair. The Führer's meaning was: "I am a better Prussian soldier, and more in the tradition of General Clausewitz, than you are."

The sands were now fast running out. It was no longer with Henlein but with Hitler himself that the tardy Czech Government had to deal. The best proof of this was the fate of a new plan of settlement put forward by the Czechs at the outset of the Nuremberg Congress. It included all Henlein's Karlsbad points. The Sudeten leader himself was ready to accept it as satisfactory. A draft formula of agreement was even drawn up by two officials of the German Foreign Ministry who were acting as advisers to him. This

was submitted to Hitler at Nuremberg. After reading it through he cast it aside with the words: "*Das ist nicht meine Meinung*" (That does not correspond to my views).

On the same day, in the course of a demonstration that occurred at Mährisch-Ostrau, a Sudeten member of the Czecho-Slovak Parliament was struck with a whip by a policeman. This provided the Sudeten leaders with a pretext for breaking off all dealings with the Czech Government on the ground that failure to prevent such incidents showed that it lacked authority to protect the Sudeten minority from outrage.

Meanwhile the British and French Ambassadors, together with most of the other Heads of Diplomatic Missions in Berlin, had arrived in Nuremberg to spend three days at the Congress. As usual, they were accommodated in two trains of sleeping-cars, parked on a siding at the Nordbahnhof. Since the normal population of Nuremberg increases by about a million during the Party Congress week, hotel accommodation is entirely taken up by members of the Government, high officials of the Party and Services, and by the guests of various nationalities invited by the Führer.

The diplomats are consequently lodged under rather cramped conditions, each ambassador being allotted two communicating sleeping-compartments, while Heads of Legations have only one. Though the siding on which they lived during their visit was decorated with garlands of laurels slung from white-painted masts, their Excellencies had to walk a hundred yards or more for their morning baths, and on this occasion heavy rain continued throughout their stay.

Such surroundings did little to relieve the gloom already generated by the international situation. At midnight on September 9, the report reached Nuremberg from London that the Cabinet had sent instructions to Sir Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador, to see Herr

Hitler and to warn him that if action were taken against Czecho-Slovakia, Britain would not stand aside.

It transpired later that these instructions were not quite so categorical. The British Ambassador had been directed to urge, not upon the Führer personally, but upon Herr von Ribbentrop, the supreme importance of finding a peaceful solution for the Sudeten question.

Sir Nevile Henderson, who has a sardonic sense of humour, always professes to see in myself a harbinger of evil tidings, for my contacts with him during the past twenty years have invariably been under conditions of international tension. I have seen him bearing serious responsibilities in Constantinople, when a weak Allied force was within an ace of conflict with Mustapha Kemal's Nationalist Army; in Cairo, after the murder of the Sirdar; in Belgrade, following the assassination of King Alexander. Never had I seen him more profoundly conscious of the gravity of the situation with which he had to deal than during those days at Nuremberg.

The Party demonstrations at Nuremberg continued in the usual series of mammoth parades. Scores of thousands of fine young men whose physique has been built up by training in the "Hitler Youth," and by six months of Labour Service, marched and chanted a patriotic liturgy before Herr Hitler, shouldering polished spades, with their muscular bodies, stripped to the waist, glistening under the pouring rain. Fifty thousand boys and girls cheered with youthful zest when he congratulated them on living among such great events as had not been known in German history for many generations. They sang exultantly a marching-hymn dedicating themselves to death. The Führer told 180,000 of the political leaders of the Nazi Party, grouped by night under a gigantic dome of hundreds of converging searchlights, that they represented "a mighty community which is determined not to capitulate."

It was a curious experience to be the guest of the German Government in an atmosphere so heavily charged with political electricity. Between a hundred and two hundred visitors of various nationalities are invited each year to the Party Congress. A large new wing, built on to the Grand Hotel in 1936, is reserved throughout the year for their use during that single week. They are provided with guardians and guides recruited from younger members of the German Diplomatic and kindred Services, all speaking foreign languages well, who do everything in their power to make the stay of the Führer's guests agreeable. A fleet of motor-buses takes them daily to the different manifestations on the programme.

Among those who were enjoying this hospitality during the critical Party Congress of 1938 were Lord and Lady Stamp, Lord McGowan, Lord Brocket, Viscount Clive, Lord and Lady Hollenden, Lord and Lady Redesdale, with their daughter, Miss Unity Freeman-Mitford, and several Members of Parliament—yet, though international strain was constantly increasing, and the conversations between the British visitors and their hosts revolved inevitably around the political situation, these contacts continued to be cordial and free from embarrassment.

On the Sunday before the end of the Parteitag, it is Herr Hitler's custom to invite about twenty foreign journalists to luncheon in that splendid old mediæval castle which dominates the city. He received us as usual in one of the restored rooms of the old Imperial apartments, opening onto a large balcony that looks out over the moat far below and the boulevards on the outskirts of the city beyond. A small crowd of people in the distance set up a cheer at the sight of Hitler's khaki-clad form among our civilian figures. "*Sie bekommen Ovationen, meine Herren!*" he said.

It is a rule that political topics should be avoided on these occasions, and, as the Führer stood there surrounded

by Herr von Ribbentrop, Herr Hess, Herr Rosenberg and Dr. Dietrich, the Head of the German Press, he talked in jocular tones mainly about German art and architecture. Leaning with folded arms against the balcony, he remarked that the only town that he had ever seen that pleased him as much as Nuremberg was Florence.

"The view of that city," he said, "spread out in the valley as one looks down upon it from the hills around, is one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen. I only wish I could have stayed a week incognito in Florence, but what would be said if someone discovered me there wearing a false beard? The world would immediately decide I was up to no good."

I thought his face looked tired and drawn, but his pale blue eyes were lively as he spoke of his determination to keep Nuremberg's mediæval character intact, although outside it he was building huge edifices for the use of future Party rallies which were to express "the National Socialist conception of architecture."

During the annual Congress, to which come delegations from all over Germany, Nuremberg takes on an atmosphere which I have seen reproduced in no city in the world. For a whole week the entire activities of the place are devoted to dealing with this mass-invasion. Not only are all hotels, schools and public buildings, together with thousands of rooms in private houses, requisitioned by the authorities, but great camps are set up amid the fir-forests in the surrounding sandy plain, and other contingents of the Nazi host are lodged in the towns and villages within a radius of forty or fifty miles, whence they are brought to the demonstrations by fleets of omnibuses, the use of private motor-cars in the city being forbidden.

Since every German attending the Congress wears some Party uniform or other, one gets the impression of an army of occupation. Especially at night, when the weather is fine, the tortuous, narrow streets of the old city, with

their ancient house-fronts, are full of scenes like living reproductions of the Middle Ages. Long trestle-tables are set out in front of the quaint inns and eating-houses, such as the *Bratwurst-Glöcklein* or the *Posthorn*, where soldiers of mediæval armies in wars now almost forgotten must have taken their meals and slaked their thirst, and at them, as in olden times, jovial parties drink beer out of pewter tankards till far into the night.

Mixing with these members of the rank-and-file of the National Socialist organization, one could detect no sign of concern as to the development of the situation which was arousing such anxiety in other European countries. The authoritarian regime seems to eliminate speculation and anxiety about such matters from the minds of its citizens. Seldom does any private individual venture to express a personal point of view on any political question. This habit of unquestioning acquiescence in Nazi leadership preserves an atmosphere of public tranquillity at critical moments which is an element of national strength, though it might make reaction stronger if the Nazi Government's series of successes were to meet with reverse.

In all human history no man has been listened to with such world-wide attention as Herr Hitler. He benefits from the conditions of his time. If Napoleon, in launching the Berlin Decrees for a Continental blockade of Britain, could have used wireless instead of mounted couriers, his pronouncement would have been awaited as keenly as those which Herr Hitler makes when he speaks *ex cathedra*.

The Führer understands human nature. No previous statesman had ever made such effective use of political methods which, without derogatory implication, may be called those of showmanship. A "Führer-Speech," like the eagerly awaited one with which he closed the Nuremberg Congress on September 12, is staged with an impressive

pomp that raises to religious fervour the enthusiasm of the fifty thousand adherents of the Nazi Party who gain the coveted privilege of being present at its delivery, while the efficient arrangements of the German Broadcasting Chief, Herr Hadamovsky, secure its resonant reproduction, not only in the remotest village of the Reich, but throughout the civilized world.

The Führer enters the hall at the end opposite the platform, and strides rapidly down the centre aisle, closely followed by Ministers and high Government officials, all, like himself, in uniform. Fifty thousand arms are thrust into the air to greet him, and to a thunder of "Heil!" from as many throats, he advances through the great audience, his face rigidly set, occasionally responding to their welcome by raising his own arm in a bent and rather weary gesture.

The platform is a huge structure, sloping upwards towards the back, and as soon as the Führer, with the hundred or two officials of his immediate following, have taken up their positions in the first rows, there comes a blare of trumpets, and the "Entry of the Standards" begins.

These are the flags of the Party organizations from all over the Reich, uniform in design and colour, but some drooping from tall poles while others are stiff, oblong canvas panels like the *vexilla* of the Roman legions, to which their resemblance is increased by gilt eagles surmounting them. The close-packed column of hundreds of sturdy, khaki-clad standard-bearers moves at a quick-step down the hall, and, dividing into two, curves round to the rear of the platform, where they mass themselves behind the Führer in a solid phalanx of crimson and gold that fills the eye with colour.

For the next ten minutes a hidden orchestra plays Wagnerian music—generally the overture to the *Meister-singer*—or a choir somewhere out of sight behind the standards sing that solemn old German "Hymn before Battle"—*Wir treten zum Beten vor Gott den Gerechten*.

During this musical interlude, intended to prepare the people to listen to the pronouncement of their ruler, Herr Hitler and the other great men of the Reich sit motionless and passive. Then Herr Hess, the Führer's Deputy, whose grey-blue eyes have a fanatical glare under shaggy black eyebrows meeting in the middle, advances to the small reading-desk set in front of the wide platform.

"Es spricht der Führer," he announces briefly but momentously. With a deliberation almost suggesting indifference, Herr Hitler rises to take his place at the stand. One of his orderlies pours out a glass of water; the flashlights of the official photographers blaze, and in a low, monotonous voice the Führer begins another of his addresses. Only after the first few sentences does his tone gradually rise, through gradations of sarcasm and resentment, till it attains a vigour which develops into a tempest of declamation.

Almost invariably the first part of his harangue is devoted to recalling the confusion and distress that prevailed in Germany before he came to power. However urgently his views upon a political topic may be awaited, he generally speaks for an hour before coming to the matter that is uppermost in the minds of his far-flung hearers. In his final speech to the Nuremberg Conference, on September 12, the violence of his words and tone when he at length addressed himself to the burning question of Czecho-Slovakia was a sign that the critical stage of the Sudeten problem had begun.

"Misery"—"attempted annihilation"—"inhuman and intolerable treatment"—"brutality and terrorism"—"pursued like wild beasts"—were the epithets of his raging rhetoric.

"God did not create these three and a half million Germans to be surrendered to a hateful Power," he fulminated. "He did not create seven and a half million Czechs to suppress and enslave them—still less to do them outrage and torture. I can only say that, if these unfor-

tunate creatures cannot help themselves, they will find my help!"

"I demand," he concluded, "that the oppression of three and a half million Germans in Czecho-Slovakia shall cease, and be replaced by the free right of self-determination!"

It is characteristic of Herr Hitler's technique as a statesman that he limits himself in public pronouncements to general principles, in preference to concrete propositions. One thing resulting clearly, however, from his speech was that the time was over when the Sudetens might have been satisfied by a grant of the eight demands made by Herr Henlein at Karlsbad.

Yet even now, Herr Hitler's reference to the "free right of self-determination" seemed to indicate that Germany asked no more than the holding of a plebiscite.

The first reaction in foreign countries was one rather of relief. "No war yet, anyhow," said the British public, which had just awaked to the fact that this tedious and obscure dispute in Central Europe might put its own security in peril. But events as well as speeches were occurring.

Early next morning I heard that a report had reached the bureau of the German Foreign Office established in Nuremberg that Czech tanks were firing on the Sudetens in the streets of Eger. I rang up *The Daily Mail* in London, offering to start at once for Eger to find out what was happening, but, with a regard for the public interest that might have surprised those who believe newspapers to delight in foreign crises, it was judged undesirable to give prominence to anything which might increase the possibility of war. I accordingly determined to make for Munich, as I heard that both the Führer and Herr von Ribbentrop were going there.

The Party Congress was over. The Führer's British guests were hastily leaving. They took farewell of their

German entertainers with the unexpressed feeling that these agreeable young men might in a day or two become their national enemies. Some of the visitors had already made a hurried departure on various pretexts, fearing internment if war between Germany and Britain should suddenly break out.

I hired a motor-car to drive from Nuremberg to Munich. The charming old towns and peaceful countryside of Franconia seemed entirely free from the war-apprehensions that filled my own mind.

At Munich fresh reports of serious trouble in the Sudetenland were arriving. Fourteen Sudetens and some Czechs had been killed, said the German evening newspapers. By telephone from London I was told that the Sudetens had attacked a Czech gendarmerie-post and carried off some of the police belonging to it.

The Sudeten leaders had issued a six hours' ultimatum to the Czech Government to cancel the martial law which had been proclaimed in eight Sudeten districts, with the threat that, if this were not done, "they would no longer be responsible for the behaviour of their people." The long-simmering surface of the Sudeten question was fast bubbling up and might at any moment boil over.

Herr Hitler's speech had been the signal for the German Propaganda Ministry to stimulate this process. "We are going to allow no relaxation of the tension," one of its publicists said to me. "International tension is the only thing that has got the Sudeten question so far along the road as it is."

The next four days brought ample proof of how powerful an instrument broadcasting can be in the hands of a totalitarian Government. At all hours of the day and night the German version of conditions in the Sudetenland was dinned into the ears of the German people. If one could believe the loud-speakers, the Czechs were carrying

on a veritable pogrom of the Sudetens. When the crisis was over, an English colleague of mine who had been in Czecho-Slovakia at the time, told me that one night when he was sitting in a beer-house at Eger filled with Sudetens, someone turned on the wireless. The German news-service was coming through in full blast with details of bloodthirsty conflicts reported to be going on in the streets of that very town. For a moment, he said, the listeners gazed at each other "in a wild surmise," and then burst into a roar of laughter.

In Munich on the day after Hitler's speech, I took tea and dined in the company of Herr von Ribbentrop, who was both bitter and emphatic about the failure of Great Britain to appreciate the German point of view in the Sudeten question. Germany, he said, had done more for England than any other Power. Not only had she voluntarily limited her fleet to 35 per cent. of the strength of the British Navy, but she had offered to guarantee British rights and interests all over the world. If such steps had failed to bring about Anglo-German understanding, it must be either that Britain was fundamentally hostile to Germany, or else that her political opinion was being misled by evil Bolshevist influences, whose extent and potency in our country Germans knew much better than we did ourselves.

"It would be a crime against humanity if the peace between Germany and Britain were broken," said Herr von Ribbentrop. "This Czech business is a matter of quite secondary importance. But Germany is prepared for any eventuality."

From the German viewpoint at that moment Britain was the unknown factor. The British Government's attitude would decide that of all other countries concerned, including Czecho-Slovakia herself. Germany was now pledged to the rescue of her Sudeten kinsmen even at the cost of war. She hoped to avoid paying that price, but the credit of the Nazi Government was at stake. Herr Hitler had gone too

far to withdraw. The question that dominated the minds of German statesmen was: Will Britain make the cause of Czecho-Slovakia her own?

Some Germans from the Sudetenland had already arrived in Munich. One of them, whom I had met before, was a former German diplomat with estates in Czecho-Slovakia.

The Sudetens, he declared, were saying "rather the devil than the Czechs." It was useless, he said, for the Czech Government to pretend to be a State engaged in the legitimate function of suppressing disorder on its own territory. The situation was now practically one of civil war. Were other countries to come to the support of Czecho-Slovakia, they would be unable, even if they won the war, to restore the rule of the Czechs over the Sudeten Germans. If the British and French Governments wanted to avert general catastrophe, they should insist upon the Czechs withdrawing their troops and police from the Sudeten area, and should send neutral forces to keep order there while the plebiscite was being held to settle the matter.

Herr Hitler himself spent the next two days in his flat on the Prinzregentenplatz in Munich, watching the effect which his open championship of the Sudetens at Nuremberg had produced upon the world. He lunched at his favourite little Italian restaurant, the *Osteria*, a modest place panelled in deal, decorated with coloured Italian earthenware vases and plates arrayed on shelves, and furnished with high-backed benches like an English chop-house. The spaghetti served there is excellent, and the Führer is fond of it. "I am sure I eat much more spaghetti in a year than you do," he said once to Signor Alfieri, the Italian Propaganda Minister. He also entertained some lady-friends to tea at the big new Art Museum he has built in Munich, sitting with them on the terrace and inspecting some new pictures.

On the morning of September 14, I became aware of considerable political activity at the Hotel Vierjahreszeiten, where, like Herr von Ribbentrop and his staff, I was staying. The Vierjahreszeiten, conducted by the brothers Walterspiel, not only has the best cooking in Germany, but has become, under the Nazi regime, so frequent a resort of its principal political personalities that it ranks almost as a State institution.

All the morning there was a continual coming and going of the Foreign Minister and his subordinates between the hotel and the Führer's flat, and in the course of the forenoon a member of his staff said to me, "I should not go far away to-day if I were you. I think something big is going to happen."

I looked at him rather dubiously. "Pleasant or unpleasant?" I inquired. The first thought that had sprung into my mind was that Germany might be about to declare war on Czecho-Slovakia.

"I think you will regard it as pleasant," was the reply, but I could not persuade him to any breach of his diplomatic reserve.

That evening I was again invited to dine with Herr von Ribbentrop in the Restaurant Walterspiel. He was sitting at the head of a table with several members of his staff when I came in, and his face bore a happier smile than I had seen there for some time.

"What would you say, Ward Price," were his first words, "if I told you that Mr. Chamberlain is coming to Germany to see the Führer to-morrow?"

"It is proof of his political courage," I replied. "Many people in England will say that he is going to Canossa."

Six months before the Prime Minister went to Berchtesgaden, I had made the suggestion in circles close to the British Government that a personal meeting between him and Herr Hitler might have good results. As it seemed to me,

Mr. Chamberlain might have found a pretext for a private visit to Germany. While there it would be natural that he should call on the Führer, to whom he could have said:

"I have not come to negotiate anything, or indeed to talk politics at all except in the most general way. But I wanted to see you face to face, because in your hands and mine the future of European peace may one day lie, and I should like to form my own idea of the kind of man with whom I have to deal."

With some personal knowledge of the Führer's temperament, I can well imagine such a contact leading to beneficial results. Herr Hitler is a great talker: Mr. Chamberlain is a good listener. The Führer would have delivered a long discourse on the European situation as a whole, and on the principles underlying German policy, but at that time it would have been a theoretical dissertation and not, as at Berchtesgaden, a peremptory challenge. The Premier need have said nothing, for the purpose of his journey would have been appraisal rather than appeasement.

This type of interview often leaves the moral advantage with the silent party, the talker remaining uncertain as to the impression he has produced, while his listener has not committed himself.

The idea of an informal meeting of that kind was declared impracticable by those to whom I mentioned it. A public visit to Berlin, they said, would stir up too much trouble in Parliament. Yet, at the end of January, 1939, Lord Baldwin related in a speech that, before Mr. Chamberlain had succeeded him as Premier, they had discussed "the possibility of making contact with those powerful men in the countries that they are ruling, but agreed that the time was not yet."

With these recollections in my mind, I felt sorry that the impending first meeting of Premier and Führer was

to take place under conditions of such acute international strain. I asked Herr von Ribbentrop to authorize me to publish an expression of the feelings of the German Government with regard to it. A statement was drawn up and approved on the telephone by Herr Hitler, who had gone that afternoon from Munich to Berchtesgaden to be ready to receive the Prime Minister next day. It expressed strong appreciation of Mr. Chamberlain's "practical attitude" and "complete confidence in his personal goodwill."

There had been a good deal of discussion during the day as to where the meeting should take place. Mr. Chamberlain's telegram proposing the visit had left the decision on this point to the Führer. Herr Hitler's first instinct had been to go to meet the Prime Minister somewhere nearer to England. At one moment, he even declared that he would spare him the journey by going to England himself, and orders were telegraphed to the Führer's steam-yacht, the *Grille*, at Kiel, to get up steam and be ready to sail immediately. But there was obviously no time to improvise a meeting anywhere else than at Berchtesgaden, so the Führer went to his villa, and Herr Hitler's special train was sent to bring Mr. Chamberlain there from Munich, 75 miles away.

The urgent need for coping with the Czech crisis was daily becoming more apparent. On the very night before the Premier's visit was arranged, the Czech police had attacked the headquarters of the Sudeten Party in that same Hotel Victoria at Eger where I had lunched with Henlein in May. The party's affairs were conducted from Prague, but a few days previously it had received secret warning of an impending Government raid upon its offices there. The staff accordingly burnt all their files and left hurriedly by motor-car for Eger, so as to be among their own people.

On the night of September 13, during a conference

attended by Herr Frank and most of the other leaders with the exception of Herr Henlein, who was at his home in Asch eight miles away, the police suddenly arrived with a warrant to search the building. The party officials refused to let them in, and barred the doors, upon which armoured cars with machine-guns were brought up to rake the windows at point-blank range.

Herr Frank, when I saw him four days later in Berchtesgaden, declared that even a field-gun had been used. The Sudetens had some revolvers and a sub-machine-gun, with which they replied to the fire. Four people were killed, two being members of the staff of the local Sudeten newspaper.

After the shooting had gone on for an hour, the garrison of the Hotel Victoria managed to escape by a secret door which led into a neighbouring building, but casual firing continued in the town all night. The Sudeten leaders, together with many thousands of the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia, left the country to seek refuge in Germany. Meanwhile, Stock Exchanges throughout the world were tumbling. Sterling had slumped heavily, and the price of wheat shot upwards.

In the midst of these dark omens it seemed of good augury that Mr. Chamberlain's arrival on September 15 should be accompanied by a flood of brilliant sunshine following upon a cloudburst which less than an hour before had deluged Munich. Sir Nevile Henderson, the Ambassador in Berlin, had reached Munich by train at 8.0 a.m., and he, together with Herr von Ribbentrop, Herr von Dirksen, the German Ambassador in London, and about thirty officials from the German Foreign Office were waiting at the aerodrome at 12.30 as the silver Lockheed Electra bringing the Prime Minister circled over the field and rolled to a halt in front of them.

Though the machine was flying the light blue ensign

of British Airways, its foreign make did not escape the eye of several German Air Force officers who were there on duty. "*Amerikanische Flugzeug*," I heard them murmur to each other.

We could see the faces of the Prime Minister and his three travelling companions, Sir Horace Wilson, Mr. Strang of the Foreign Office, and a detective from Scotland Yard, gazing through the little windows along the side of the machine, on what, in the case of Mr. Chamberlain, was the first sight he had ever had of Germans on their native soil.

"He will think Germany is mobilized already," was the thought that crossed my mind, for most of the people waiting on the aerodrome, except Herr von Ribbentrop, were in uniform and wore swords. This was rather to do honour to the Prime Minister than to dismay him, for on all ceremonial occasions German Ministers and officials are so attired.

The door of the Lockheed was opened, and the Prime Minister stepped to the ground, bareheaded and smiling—his stiff wing-collar and heavy grey silk tie completing the old-fashioned English character of his appearance, which was further emphasized by the so-soon-to-become-famous umbrella in his hand.

Stalwart young Baron Dörnberg, head of the German Protocol, who is nearly seven feet high, and Herr von Ribbentrop, wearing the friendliest of his always pleasant smiles, were the first to greet him.

"We are glad you are early, but, as a matter of fact, until we got a wireless message from your 'plane just now, we were not expecting you for another half-hour," said the Foreign Minister. "I hope you have had a good flight."

"Well, it is the first I have ever made, so that I can't judge whether it was good or not," answered Mr. Chamberlain, adding with an ingenuous air which left his eager listeners wondering whether there was any

cryptic meaning in his words, "The sun was shining when we left England. It was only when we got over the Continent that the clouds began."

Having obtained permission to travel with the Prime Minister in the special train to Berchtesgaden, I followed him from the aerodrome in one of the string of cars that carried the party to the railway station. It is a drive of about three miles. The way was thinly lined with curious onlookers, trying in vain to spot Mr. Chamberlain as the automobiles, with hoods raised, went swiftly by, and greeting the whole procession with cries of "Heil!"

When we reached the broad square in front of the station, we found a crowd of several hundred people, who set up a cheer as Mr. Chamberlain and Herr von Ribbentrop got out of their car. The Prime Minister was clearly both surprised and pleased at the warmth of his reception. He stopped and turned, hat in hand, towards the applauding spectators, with a broad smile on his face. The last Head of a foreign Government whom I had seen standing on that spot was Signor Mussolini a year previously, and though the organized demonstration which had greeted him had been of far more massive proportions, it seemed to me that on this occasion there was a more spontaneous note in the welcome.

At the entrance to the State waiting-room, Herr Wagner, the *Gauleiter*, or Senior Party Official, of Bavaria, was waiting with a short speech, and then we passed on to a platform cleared of the public, where the Führer's special train was waiting. Though the party travelling only numbered about thirty, the train was six coaches long, consisting of large and handsomely decorated sleeping apartments, as well as restaurant and kitchen cars and the Führer's own private coach, with a saloon panelled in bird's-eye maple, a bedroom with a real bed, and a bathroom lined with marble.

"I really must have a sleep after luncheon," said the Prime Minister.

Mr. Chamberlain's aeroplane had done the journey from London in three and a half hours instead of the normal five. He consequently arrived at the station before the line had been cleared for the passage of the train, so that it was half-an-hour before the journey to Berchtesgaden could begin.

At 1.15 the train pulled out. Mr. Chamberlain made his way with Herr von Ribbentrop along the corridor to the dining-car, and, despite his declared intention of resting after lunch, stayed there until 3.0 p.m., which was only an hour before the train arrived.

He sat next to the Foreign Minister, with his back to the window, in the middle of one of the long sides of a table laid for fifteen people, while the rest of us lunched at small tables at the other end of the car, separated from the principal party by a glass partition. The chef had prepared an excellent meal, with one course expressly chosen to please the British visitors. It consisted of:

Turtle Soup

A special kind of trout from Lake Starnberg

Roast Beef and Yorkshire Pudding

Cheese Cakes

Fruit

A bumpy flight half-way across Europe had not damaged Mr. Chamberlain's appetite for luncheon, with which he took a glass of sherry, some Rhine wine, a German red wine and a glass of port, talking with animation all the time and smoking a cigar with his coffee after lunch.

As everybody at the table spoke English, the con-

versation went easily, and though the glass partition prevented one from hearing what the talk was about, I was afterwards told that it had included a discussion on fishing between the Prime Minister and Herr von Ribbentrop; comment on the beautiful scenery of green meadows and black pine-woods against a background of grey stone mountains which we saw through showers of early autumn rain; and expressions of regret from Mr. Chamberlain that he spoke no German, leading on to an argument as to the correct rendering of a German word in Herr von Ribbentrop's message of welcome, for which he and I the night before had had difficulty in finding an exact English equivalent.

Nothing was said about politics. The glimpses that Mr. Chamberlain caught of the *Autostrasse*, a magnificent motor-highway that leads from Munich to Salzburg, led him to ask whether driving along a road so straight and standardized was not monotonous. This raised a difference of opinion among his German hosts, some of whom maintained that the recent increase in the sales of automobile wireless-sets was proof that drivers needed some distraction to keep them from falling asleep on these great arterial roads.

One could not help admiring the Prime Minister's unconstrained geniality. There was not the least indication in his bearing that his mind was occupied with anything but the enjoyment of his luncheon and his journey. It might have been expected that instead of making casual small-talk at the luncheon-table he would want to be alone with Sir Horace Wilson, rehearsing the arguments he was going to bring to bear on Herr Hitler in the attempt to avert what everyone now realized to be the approaching danger of war. If there is one British quality which Germans admire more than any other it is that of calm in an emergency, and Mr. Chamberlain gave a convincing display of it.

About half-way to Berchtesgaden, the train stopped

for a few minutes in the station of Rosenhain. I saw the faces of my German companions suddenly set into preoccupied expressions. For there, on the track next to ours, was a long military train, made up of goods-wagons filled with soldiers, and of open trucks laden with tanks and armoured cars.

Mr. Chamberlain happened to be sitting with his back to the window that looked out on this evidence of German military activity. He went on talking, unaware of the spectacle behind him. One knew that "manœuvres" were going on all over Germany, but the suspicion was unavoidable that these troops were on their way to Czecho-Slovakia's most vulnerable frontier, adjoining Germany's newly-annexed province of the Ostmark.

At Freilassing, the junction for the branch-line to Berchtesgaden, a telephone-wire was brought into the train so that Baron Dörnberg might ring up the Führer's house to announce the exact time of our arrival.

As the train climbed on up the Obersalzburg valley, workmen and peasants on the road beside the line waved and smiled as warmly as if Mr. Chamberlain had been one of their own family coming home. When at last we reached the little station that lies beside a rushing stream at the foot of the steep hillside on which Herr Hitler's villa stands, the whole population of Berchtesgaden seemed to be massed in a solid block beside the open platform. Most of them wore the picturesque costume of Upper Bavaria, and they shouted a welcome which the Prime Minister acknowledged by waving his hat.

The burly, spectacled figure of Dr. Meissner, the Chief of Herr Hitler's staff in his capacity of President of the Reich, was waiting to take the Premier and his party in a string of big black motor-cars through the curving main street of the little town, with its painted gables and wooden balconies, to the Grand Hotel, which stands just

outside it, amid woods, on the edge of a deep gorge. A guard of honour of stalwart steel-helmeted members of Herr Hitler's *Leibstandarte*, whose black uniform is relieved by white belts and gloves, presented arms as the Prime Minister entered the hotel. Three-quarters of an hour later, he came out again to drive up to the mountainside to the Berghof, where Herr Hitler was awaiting him.

CHAPTER XIV

FIRST CONTACT AT BERCHTESGADEN

IT was three hours before Mr. Chamberlain and Herr von Ribbentrop with their staffs returned from Herr Hitler's villa. The small entrance-hall of the Grand Hotel remained during that time packed with journalists who had arrived by aeroplane from all parts of Europe.

Seldom has a human face been more eagerly scrutinized than the Prime Minister's when he got out of the car under the portico and walked up the steps. He wore his usual rather enigmatic smile, but relief came when he remarked to my colleague, Wilson Broadbent, who was waiting at the hotel entrance: "It has been a very friendly talk." His next words brought surprise. "I am going back to London to-morrow morning to make a report to my Cabinet colleagues," he said.

For a moment the idea of a breakdown flashed into the minds of those who heard him, but he went on to say that he would be returning to Germany in the course of the next week to see Herr Hitler again. With that, the Prime Minister disappeared from view to his rooms upstairs, where he dined, after his strenuous day, alone with Sir Horace Wilson and Mr. Strang.

Later that evening, I was invited to join Herr and Frau von Ribbentrop at dinner in their apartment. I found that the Foreign Minister took a cheerful view of the first contact between the two Heads of Governments. They were to meet next time, I was told, at Godesberg,

on the Rhine, so as to spare Mr. Chamberlain the long journey to Berchtesgaden. Herr Hitler had said that he was very favourably impressed with the Prime Minister's personality, and realized that he was dealing with a straightforward man.

As I telegraphed to *The Daily Mail* that evening, the conversation between the Führer and Premier had begun with a full and emphatic statement by the former of his demand of self-determination for the Sudetens. Twelve days later Mr. Chamberlain told the House of Commons that Herr Hitler had made his mind plain on this point "in courteous but perfectly definite terms," and had added that, if the German minority could not achieve self-determination by their own efforts, he would assist them to do so, and, rather than wait, would be prepared to risk a world-war. To this the Prime Minister had rejoined that if Herr Hitler was contemplating an immediate invasion of Czecho-Slovakia he could only wonder why he had been allowed to come all the way from London, since he was evidently wasting his time.

The German Chancellor answered that if the British Government would accept the principle of self-determination, he was ready to discuss methods for carrying it out, but that should they reject this principle, he agreed that further discussion would be useless.

It was at this point that the Prime Minister announced his intention of returning to London to put the position defined by Herr Hitler before his colleagues, and asked for a pledge that the Führer would abstain from invading Czecho-Slovakia until they had had time to consider his report. The Führer gave this on condition that no developments took place in Czecho-Slovakia of such a nature as to force his hand.

The conversation had lasted three hours, because Herr Hitler had devoted a good part of that time to an angry recapitulation of the oppressive treatment to which

the Sudetens had been subjected. Herr von Ribbentrop had also handed to the Prime Minister the text of a proclamation issued by Herr Henlein that morning demanding a plebiscite for the purpose of bringing about the transfer of the Sudetens to Germany. It was the first time that this claim had been formally put forward, and, owing to his early start from London, Mr. Chamberlain had not heard of it. After issuing this manifesto, Herr Henlein and the other Sudeten leaders crossed the frontier into Germany, as the Czech Government had issued a warrant for their arrest, and had ordered the dissolution of the Sudeten German Party.

The talk at the Berghof began round a flower-bedecked tea-table, covered with a white lace tablecloth, at which Mr. Chamberlain sat between the Führer and Herr von Ribbentrop, with Dr. Paul Schmidt, the tall, burly, jovial official interpreter of the German Government on the Führer's other side. Next to Dr. Schmidt was Sir Nevile Henderson, the British Ambassador. A German general and three members of Herr Hitler's staff made up the rest of the party, which was waited on by orderlies in black S.S. uniform.

After tea, the two Heads of Governments and the official interpreter left the rest of the party and moved into the Führer's private room for the more serious part of their discussion. The rain was pouring in torrents as Mr. Chamberlain drove down the hill to the Grand Hotel again.

Hardly had he disappeared to his rooms upstairs, than another crisis set in, this time a journalistic one. Of the scores of newspapermen who had arrived, some few were lucky enough to get accommodation at the Grand Hotel, but the others had had to take rooms wherever they could find them in the struggling little town. All were now furiously demanding telephone-calls to every part of Europe. The two young under-porters in charge

of the switchboard were besieged with pleas, appeals and objurgations, but Berchtesgaden was not telephonically equipped for such an avalanche. The Press Department of the German Propaganda Ministry had arranged for new lines to be installed, but these would not be ready until the following morning.

A harassed official announced that there was more chance of getting through from the Deutsches Haus, a hotel in the town, where one of the new lines was reported to be already working.

"Where is it? Where is it?" clamoured a dozen anxious voices.

"Just a little way down the road on the left," was the reply, and instantly a rush of bare-headed "diplomatic correspondents" from London set off into the darkness under the drenching rain as fast as they could run. They were soaked to the skin when they arrived at the Deutsches Haus, which proved to be at least half a mile away, only to find communications there as bad as at the Grand Hotel. I sent my own message by motor-car for transmission from Salzburg, an hour's drive away.

So, long after midnight, ended an historic day. There was more typing than sleeping going on in the bedrooms of the Grand Hotel that night. In one of them, the official German report of the conversation at the Berghof was being transcribed. It filled thirty-five pages, and must have been close on 10,000 words in length. Of these thirty-five pages, I learned that Mr. Chamberlain's observations took up twelve, so that the British Government's point of view had been stated at some length.

Next morning, Thursday, September 16, the Prime Minister awoke at 8 o'clock to find the rain still streaming down. From his bedroom window, he looked out upon a dense wall of white mist. He could not know that beyond

it, if the sun had been shining, he would have seen one of the finest mountain-views in Europe, for the twin, snow-covered peaks of the Grosser and Kleiner Watzmann rose right opposite across a deep ravine.

Seven open motor-cars, with the hoods up, were waiting outside the hotel. At Mr. Chamberlain's request, Herr von Ribbentrop had promised to drive him back to Munich along the *Autostrasse*. This was to be a seventy-five mile run, through the charming scenery of the foothills of the Bavarian Alps.

Herr von Ribbentrop was optimistic about the weather when he met his guest in the hall. "It always rains up here at this time of year," he said. "We shall find the sun shining on the *Autobahn*."

So at 9.30 a.m. our short procession set off through the winding main street of Berchtesgaden and down the valley leading to Freilassing, half an hour's drive away, where we joined the great arterial road. Bad Reichenhall is the only town of any size through which we passed, and many people were lining its streets to give Mr. Chamberlain a "Heil!"

One enters these motor-highways, of which about 3,000 miles now exist in Germany, by a complicated approach known as the "clover-leaf" system, which ensures cars coming into the main road in the direction of the traffic, and from a narrow angle which does away with the necessity for a sharp turn.

As the Foreign Minister had foretold, the sun broke out almost directly we swept on to the broad, double, concrete track, divided in the middle by a continuous strip of grass.

The cars pulled up for a moment while their hoods were lowered, and Herr von Ribbentrop was then able to point out the details that make these roads the safest of all speed-tracks. He showed Mr. Chamberlain the sidings which are the only places where parking is allowed, and the signs which give warning 300 yards in advance

of the exits from the *Autobahn*. Each of these leads to a bridge over the main track, so that there is no need to cross an opposing stream of traffic to reach the other side. There are no buildings on the roads, for nothing is allowed to be put up within 500 yards on either side of them. Neither cyclists nor foot-passengers may use the highway.

The Prime Minister was interested in the fact that where the *Autobahn* runs along a slope, the two 30-yard-wide tracks are sometimes on different levels, and his attention was directed to the system by which the road is planned in such a way that each stretch of it carries the eye on to some commanding distant feature of the landscape.

Up to the present there has been little traffic on the *Autobahnen*, owing to the fact that private motor-cars are much fewer in Germany than in England. We hardly saw a dozen other cars on the fifty-mile stretch between Freilassing and Munich. At one point a gang of convicts was working at road-repairs under an armed warder.

The driver of the big black Mercédès in which the Prime Minister was travelling set a fast pace, and I saw the speedometer-needle several times reach the 130-kilometre mark, showing a speed of 80 m.p.h.

The sun was now flooding the rich green landscape, picking out the white towers of churches, and the red roofs of farms with broad eaves and long galleries across their fronts, scattered over the rolling green foothills. The recently-cut second hay-crop of the year, drenched with heavy rain, was stacked up on tripods of wooden poles.

Soon after crossing a viaduct 300 feet high over a gorge the road reaches the Chiemsee, a large lake bordered on the further side by fir-forests. In its midst stands an island, where the mad King Ludwig II of Bavaria built a castle sixty years ago.

Running beside the lake, we came to a big isolated modern restaurant, with a broad open-air terrace stretching far out into the reedy waters. Here the cars pulled up, and we got out to walk on the terrace. There was a charming view across the lively waters, dotted in the distance with the white sails of pleasure-boats. The inn itself was deserted, except for buxom young waitresses, who, in their red and green Bavarian costumes, gathered excitedly to look from a respectful distance at the distinguished visitor.

The Prime Minister asked what fish the lake provided, and Herr von Ribbentrop called up the proprietor to answer. He said that the chief was of a kind called *Renken*, peculiar to Bavaria, which is only found in very cold water, and that they were netted from boats.

Driving on again, we were soon on the outskirts of Munich, where the first building pointed out to Mr. Chamberlain was the new House of German Art, the vast picture-gallery designed by Herr Hitler himself, with a long, pillared portico. Next we came to the Königsplatz, a square closed to wheeled traffic, which has become the forum of the Nazi Party, for one side of it is taken up with the great *Führerbau*, Herr Hitler's personal headquarters, and with the new Brown House which is the chief centre of the Nazi Movement. In the previous November, I had accompanied Lord Halifax on a tour of these buildings, which are also of Herr Hitler's creation and of great magnificence within. It was to the *Führerbau* that Mr. Chamberlain returned on September 29.

The cars were stopped for a moment, and we got out to walk through the classic triumphal arch into the broad, flagged square. At the other end of it Herr von Ribbentrop pointed out the two lofty colonnades beneath which are buried the sixteen Nazis who fell in the putsch of November, 1923. To their tombs, on the anniversary of that day, Herr Hitler leads on foot a procession of the survivors of the Party members who took part in the original march.

It was now nearly noon, so after a few minutes in the autumn sunshine on the Königsplatz we drove on to the aerodrome, where Mr. Chamberlain was to lunch before starting back to London. The meal was served at one end of the upstairs restaurant, which had been screened off, and all twenty of us sat down at a single round table.

The Prime Minister was placed between General Ritter von Epp, the Governor of Bavaria, and Herr Siebert, President of the local Bavarian Government, who had come to greet him, while Herr von Ribbentrop was on the opposite side. Mr. Chamberlain could talk only to General von Epp, whom he congratulated upon his command of English. The General replied that he had learned it in China, where he had been an officer with the German Expeditionary Force during the Boxer rebellion. I heard Herr Siebert, who could evidently understand this exchange of remarks, ask General von Epp to tell the Prime Minister that he was sorry to be unable to speak to him in English also, but that he hoped to be excused on the ground that he had never had the advantage of visiting China.

At the coffee-stage of this luncheon, I had the opportunity of a short talk with Mr. Chamberlain. He expressed the conviction that he had been right to come to Germany. "I spoke frankly to Herr Hitler," he said, "and he put his views plainly to me. I am sure we understand each other much better than we could ever have done at a distance, and I feel hopeful about the negotiations that I am going to resume with him next week.

"A thing that has impressed me," he added, "is the friendly temper of the German people. They smile so cheerfully and spontaneously that I feel that they are really glad to see me."

Two or three thousand onlookers were waiting at the edge of the aerodrome when we left the building to walk towards the aeroplane. The representative of the German

broadcasting system handed Mr. Chamberlain the microphone before he got in, and he spoke a few sentences of thanks for his reception, ending in German with "*Danke schön.*"

As the silver Lockheed disappeared into the blue northern sky, I heard nothing but expressions of satisfaction from the Government officials among whom I was standing. They had all found Mr. Chamberlain *sympatisch*, which means "friendly." His unassuming and straightforward bearing had done something to disarm, for the moment, those hostile suspicions of British statesmen which are engendered even in the minds of intelligent Germans by the frequent denunciations of their national Press.

I drove back to Berchtesgaden to find that more disturbing news had arrived from the Sudeten area. It had been brought by Herr Frank, the second leader of the Sudeten party who, the night before, had escaped across the Czech frontier and come to report to Herr Hitler the danger to which he believed the German minority to be exposed.

I met Herr Frank in the hotel, and drove with him down to the station where he was taking the train to some destination that he would not reveal. It was to be the headquarters of a newly-formed "Sudeten Legion" to be recruited out of the ten thousand or more members of the German minority who, he said, had already taken refuge in Germany. He was wearing the dark grey uniform of the Sudeten Party, and told me that he had not had his boots off for three days and nights. "Things could not be worse in the Sudetenland," he said. "We cannot even guess at the number of the Sudetens who have lost their lives."

Unduly gloomy though this account of the situation proved to be, it was typical of the reports that were believed in Germany and filled the Führer's mind with the feeling that he must take action if a settlement of

the whole question could not be reached within very few days. I was relieved, at 11 o'clock that evening, to hear that Herr von Ribbentrop was up at the Berghof with Herr Hitler, both of them watching a film.

While the Head of the German Government was thus relaxing in one of his favourite forms of entertainment, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, back in London, had been to see the King and had also held a Cabinet Council, which was attended by Lord Runciman, who had flown from Prague on a course close to that by which the Premier came from Munich.

The report which their own mediator made to the British Ministers leaned definitely on the side of the Sudeten minority. Lord Runciman said that the Czech administration of the German minority for the past twenty years had "not been actively oppressive, and certainly not terroristic, but marked by tactlessness, lack of understanding, petty intolerance and discrimination."

He added that the Sudetens had been placed under Czech police who spoke no German; that Czech colonists had been settled in the midst of German populations; that Czech firms were favoured against German firms in the granting of State contracts, and that the Government provided work and relief for Czechs rather than for Germans.

He declared in favour of the immediate transfer to Germany of the frontier-districts where the Sudeten population was in a large majority. He thought that a plebiscite was an unnecessary formality, since there was real danger of civil war in delaying the change.

Mr. Chamberlain thus discovered that the investigator of his own appointing had come, as the result of personal observation, to recommend the "self-determination" for the Sudetens which Herr Hitler had demanded at Berchtesgaden—with the difference, however, that the Fuhrer had suggested a plebiscite as the preliminary to this step,

whereas Lord Runciman was for handing over the frontier-districts without any such formality.

The next day, Saturday, September 17, was one of brilliant Indian summer at Berchtesgaden. I had asked to be received by Herr Hitler, and during the morning the reply came in the form of an invitation to take tea with him that afternoon. There seemed to be something mysterious about this, for inquiries were made as to whether I had a heavy greatcoat. In view of the warm weather, and of the fact that the Berghof is only ten minutes' drive from the hotel, this scarcely seemed necessary, yet one was provided for me, for I learned that I was to be taken somewhere where not even Herr Hitler had ever been before.

There is no use in questioning any of those in close touch with Herr Hitler about his intentions, for, even on matters which to an outsider seem comparatively insignificant, they maintain a baffling secrecy. It was only on the drive up to the Berghof, directly after lunch, that our unknown destination was revealed.

I was told that on top of the Kehlstein, a precipitous peak 6,000 feet high, whose summit is 3,000 feet above the mountain-slope on which the Berghof stands, the Führer had had a building erected which, by reason of its inaccessible situation, was unique in the world. Wheeled vehicles could not get anywhere near it, and even on foot it could be reached only by a path hacked out of the rock for the purpose. This mountain-retreat had just been completed, and Herr Hitler himself was going up there that day for the first time to inaugurate it with a tea-party.

"But if it is so difficult to get at, how was it built, and how are we going to go there?" I asked. I had in mind recollections of those *telefericas*, consisting of little coffin-like steel boxes hanging from cables, by which one used to be slung over precipices in the Italian Alps during the

war. It seemed unlikely that Herr Hitler would use this mode of transport, but his staff had no further details to give.

"You will see," they said, "and you will be surprised. It is the sort of place that not even the richest of American millionaires could build. It could only be done by someone with the resources of a Government behind him."

The party met at the Berghof, on whose broad terrace Herr Hitler, bare-headed and immaculate as usual, was walking up and down, wearing instead of his usual khaki uniform a well-cut, light-brown, double-breasted suit with a soft white silk collar and a brown and white tie. Herr von Ribbentrop, Dr. Goebbels, Herr Himmler, Herr Walter Hewel, the Foreign Minister's Chief of Staff, General Bodenschatz and half a dozen others were there. A string of cars was waiting at the head of the steep drive which leads up to the shelf on the side of the hill where the Berghof stands.

We stayed at the Berghof for half an hour, as the party gathered in the large main hall, walled with tapestries, furnished in light-coloured wood, and hung with Italian old masters. Herr Hitler walked up and down on the terrace with Herr Hewel and myself. After some general remarks I mentioned that since he and the Prime Minister had met there was a strong hope in England that a peaceful solution of the Czech problem would be found, and I asked whether he felt that this hope was any nearer fulfilment. "I am convinced of Mr. Chamberlain's sincerity and goodwill," he said, seeming to choose his words with deliberation. "I can't tell yet whether he can put it through." And then he added in a tone of grim emphasis, "But a solution has got to be found—*so oder so*" (if not in one way, in another). He changed the subject by pointing out the features of the glorious mountain-view that lay beneath us.



THE AUTHOR WITH HERR HITLER ON THE TERRACE OF THE
BERGHOF BERCHTESGADEN

"That peak opposite is the Untersberg. There is an old Bavarian legend that in a cave inside it the Emperor Karl der Grosse (Charlemagne) sits sleeping, with his white beard constantly growing, and that when it has three times grown round the stone table before him, he will wake and reign over a new Germany. It is odd," added the Führer, "how these old peasant tales sometimes embody local facts that have been lost to memory. Quite lately it was discovered that the Untersberg does, in fact, contain huge caverns, whose entrance had been overgrown by brushwood and forgotten.

"*Und da,*" he exclaimed, "*liegt Salzburg!* The Austrian frontier formerly lay between, just beyond those foothills. For years I used to stand here and look towards Salzburg, longing one day to bring it into the Reich, and this year, at last, as if by hypnotic force, my dream came true!"

"Hypnotic force!" In those words lay much of the difference which makes Adolf Hitler a mystery to other Governments. What British Prime Minister would claim, even in casual conversation, that he had done anything by psychic power? Enlightened opportunism—clever timing—pertinacity—such explanations of success might be invoked without arousing misgiving, but to hint that his policy had anything mystic about it would be fatal.

In Britain politics is a game, played for pleasure or profit, under rules or conventions as recognized as those of bridge. In Nazi Germany political leadership is a mission, confined to the few. Those who at present exercise it were selected by their own achievements in the "Time of Struggle," while, for the future, 800 carefully picked young Germans of outstanding quality are being trained in three "Junker Castles" with as much care and zeal as the Jesuits themselves devote to the preparation of their recruits.

Hitler's rule is founded, indeed, on his prestige as a

prophet. The infallibility of the Fuhrer is a fundamental dogma of the Nazi creed. So strong is the conviction of his followers that he has been "called" to the leadership of the German nation, that reliance upon "hypnotic force" would seem to them quite in keeping with his character and responsibilities.

The time had come for the start of the journey to Kehlstein. The string of cars set out upon an excellent road, five miles long, specially built as an approach to the Fuhrer's eyrie. Soon the place itself came into sight, a low building, filling the whole top of a pinnacle of rock which is one of the lesser peaks of the 8,500 feet high Hoher Goll. In constant zig-zags and devil's-elbows we climbed at a steep gradient up the mountain-side, each twist of the road bringing into view a fresh perspective of snow-topped, rocky Alps. Here and there along the way were sentries in the black uniform of the Hitler Life Guards.

At last the road came to a dead stop at a sort of terrace forming a shelf on the mountain-face. And there, at the foot of the sheer wall of rock that towered up to the peak still high above us, were two doors of solid bronze, twelve or fifteen feet high. They looked like a fairy-tale illustration of Ali Baba's treasure-cave. Their polished surface was smooth and unornamented except for great handles embossed with lions' heads.

Somebody pressed an electric button and the brass gates swung slowly and silently back, to reveal another pair beyond, which opened in like manner. The treasure-cave impression grew stronger, for, driven straight into the solid mountain before us, lay a great corridor 130 yards in length. As broad and lofty as the subways of the London Underground Railway, it was lined with blocks of rough-hewn red marble. At intervals of a few yards, electric lights, in bowls of bronze and crystal, hung from the roof. Down this spacious and gleaming passage our party

advanced, half a dozen abreast, into the rocky heart of the Kehlstein.

At the end of the corridor was another set of bronze doors, which opened into a lift as large as the drawing-room of many a London flat, and furnished with padded leather settees and arm-chairs. It might have been in a big hotel instead of the bowels of the Bavarian Alps. Then the doors were closed and we started on a 400-foot ascent to the summit of the mountain.

"What would happen if the lift stopped half-way?" inquired Dr. Goebbels slyly.

"World-politics would have to stop too," was the Fuhrer's sardonic reply, and someone explained that there was a staircase round the shaft which had been made for purposes of its construction, so that a hold-up in the heart of the Kehlstein need not last indefinitely.

For about three minutes the lift continued its noiseless climb. It was odd to find oneself with most of the leading members of the German Government in the interior of a Bavarian mountain, on the way to a place whose creation had been kept so secret that no one knew anything about it except the workmen who had built it. The lift stopped at length opposite another pair of sliding copper doors, through which we stepped straight out into the entrance-hall of the Fuhrer's aerial watch-tower.

The castle-like atmosphere suitable to its site on top of an inaccessible crag had been carried out in the style of the building, for its bare, warm-red walls of Nurnberg sandstone were hung with tapestries, and the furniture was of light wood carved in old German style. Through a long, narrow, oak-panelled dining-room, containing a table for thirty people, and a sideboard covered with pewter, we passed into the semi-circular, stone-built, tapestry-hung, sun-flooded saloon of this sky-palace.

Around its curving walls are six big windows looking out on every side across views of grim mountain, sombre

lake and distant shadowy plain, while the inward side is taken up by a hearth of polished red marble, where a log fire was burning.

Herr Hitler led the way about the house with enthusiasm, his eyes sparkling in appreciation of the combination of architectural style and unique environment.

After admiring the outlook over mountain-tops, pine-forests and crags, beyond which the dark waters of the Königssee stretched away in a deep gorge to the south, he took his guests into another room at the side of the building, leading on to a broad, covered stone balcony, built on the side of a ravine falling as a precipice two thousand feet deep into a valley called the Endsthal. The upper end of this gorge was shut in by the 8,500 feet peak of the Hoher Göll, on whose summit lay a sheet of perpetual snow, sparkling in the autumn sun. Herr Hitler pointed to a small white pinnacle jutting up into view against the sky above the edge of the wall of rock on the other side of the canyon into which we were peering.

"Do you know what that is?" he said. "It is the top of the Gross Glockner, the biggest mountain in Greater Germany, 12,500 feet high."

In the clear Alpine atmosphere its sharp outline looked almost within rifle-shot, yet it was seventy miles away.

"I am going to have a 50-foot-wide motor-road built from Berchtesgaden to the Gross Glockner, right across all the moraines and glaciers in between," he said. "It will tunnel the Alps in two places. One passage will be four-and-a-half, and the other five-and-a-half miles long. Each tunnel will be double, so that the traffic moving in either direction will not meet. The ventilation will be the hardest part of the work. It will be the finest mountain motor-drive in Europe. And down there at the point from which it will start, I am going to have a splendid Alpine hotel put up."

One felt the European crisis must surely be no more

than an unpleasant dream of the night before. I looked round on the stone balcony. Here were Hitler, Ribbentrop, Goebbels and Himmler—the all-powerful Head of the German nation, together with three of his closest collaborators. In their hands lay the decision as to whether within a few days another great war should start in Europe. Yet they were enjoying this outing with no more apparent anxieties than any ordinary group of holiday-makers.

“What a spectacle a great storm would be up here!” I remarked.

“Ah, that is what I am looking forward to,” replied Herr Hitler, “a thunderstorm among these mountains—you can’t imagine anything more impressive. Once I was walking in that valley down below when one suddenly broke out. The black clouds rolled up the ravine and were caught among the mountain-slopes above. The roar of the thunder echoed from the walls of rock, and the lightning flashes were incessant. You would have thought that the forces of hell had broken loose. The lightning was striking all around, and I had to spend the night in a little hut at the bottom of the ravine.”

The Führer’s adjutant took me to see the rest of this fantastic mountain-top castle. I found large kitchens, with the latest electrical devices, for the building is supplied with power and light by cables from the generating plant at the Berghof, 3,000 feet below. The water-supply comes from a mountain spring, fed by the drifts of snow that fill the hollows of the surrounding crags.

There were dining-rooms for the members of the Führer’s *Leibstandarte* and for his servants, but no bedrooms, for Herr Hitler only intends to use the place by day. He had already given the building the modest name of “The Tea-house.” He remarked that the physical fact of being so high above the world below would provide an atmosphere particularly suitable for conferences, and I was shown a telephone-switchboard with direct lines to the Führer’s offices in Berlin and Munich.

Going out-of-doors, I found that this single-storied stone pavilion occupies practically the whole of the top of the Kehlstein, which had been levelled to receive it. A rocky path runs round the house, skirting the precipice so closely that it would make some people giddy to walk along it. At the narrow end of the summit an outdoor arbour has been built on a pinnacle of rock, where one could sit and toss a biscuit into the abyss almost anywhere around.

"What did it all cost?" I asked. "How much labour did it take? How many thousands of tons of rock must have been blasted to make that tunnel and the lift-shaft and to level the site for the building?"

To these questions I could get no answer. The "Tea-house," I was told, was not an achievement to be measured in terms of money or material. It was a gift of the nation to its Führer, as an example of the efficiency, skill and good taste with which Germany could carry out a project that would be entirely unrealizable in other countries where conditions of cost predominate.

We gathered for tea, a party of a dozen, in the great semi-circular saloon. It was hard to leave the open windows. The open-air swimming-bath that Marshal Goering has had made in the grounds of his cottage by the Berghof gleamed below like a morsel of jade. The new white barracks of the Führer's bodyguard lay half-hidden among the dark trees. Herr Hitler pointed to the blue line of the horizon, beyond the lowlands of Upper Austria, at least a hundred miles to the northward.

"That is the Boehmerwald, just inside the Czech frontier," he said in a sombre tone, and then, as if the distant sight of a region inhabited by a still unredeemed German population had recalled the international crisis to his mind, he added: "How I should have liked to bring Mr. Chamberlain up here if he could have stayed a little

longer! It would have been a revelation to him of what Germans can accomplish."

We sat down to tea in a semi-circle facing the fire of heavy logs. My chair was next to Herr Hitler's, with Dr. Goebbels next to me and Herr von Ribbentrop on the Führer's other side. Half a dozen stalwart young footmen, wearing short white jackets, handed round the tea and cakes. Herr Hitler helped himself liberally. Tea is his favourite meal.

It was an opportunity to try to discover what the Führer thought about the Sudeten crisis. For the hour that we were there, I put questions to him which he answered at great length. The rest remained silent, listening. Only occasionally did Herr von Ribbentrop interject a remark.

Leaning back in a tapestried armchair, Herr Hitler talked in tones sometimes low-pitched, sometimes rising in emphasis and resentment.

I mentioned the statement made the day before by Dr. Hodza, the Czecho-Slovak Prime Minister, that the suggestion of a plebiscite for the Sudetens was impossible.

"Yes. The Czechs say they cannot hold a plebiscite because such a measure is not provided for in their constitution," retorted Herr Hitler. "To me their constitution seems to provide for one thing only—which is that seven million Czechs shall oppress eight millions of minority peoples.

"This Czech trouble has got to be ended once and for all—and ended now," he went on in a grim tone. "It is a malignant tumour that is poisoning the whole European organism. If it were allowed to exist any longer, it would go on infecting international relations until they broke down in fatal collapse."

"Are you preparing to take action against the Czechs if they refuse to give the Sudetens the right of self-determination?" I asked.

"Of course," was Herr Hitler's emphatic reply.

"And what would you do with the Czechs then?" I asked.

"If we have to march in, they are finished," was the reply. "If they make the necessary concessions to the Sudetens in time, they can carry on their own affairs as they like.

"If they are wise, they will see where their own interest lies. Italy, for instance, had always believed that the independence of Austria was of fundamental importance to her, but Mussolini realized that so unnatural a State could no longer continue, and that the friendship of a powerful nation like Germany was of greater value to him than the existence on his frontiers of a small, internally divided country. By renouncing what had formerly been a basic principle of Italian foreign policy, he removed an obstacle between Italy and Germany. He thereby made it possible for them to become united in sincere friendship, without injuring the interests of his own country.

"The present state of affairs in Czecho-Slovakia has lasted for twenty years," Herr Hitler continued. "No one can calculate what it has cost the peoples of Europe in that time.

"It was the existence of that country as the ally of Soviet Russia, with territory forming a salient thrust forward into the very heart of Germany, which forced me to create a great German Air Force. This expansion of our aerial armaments led France and Britain to reply by increasing their own air-fleets, thus entailing a further expenditure of money.

"When it became obvious last spring that the situation now prevailing in Czecho-Slovakia was about to develop, I doubled the German air strength, and if the present crisis were allowed to continue, Marshal Goering would soon be asking me to order it to be doubled again. This would lead the British and the French to double theirs, and so the mad race would go on.

"Another costly undertaking imposed upon me by my determination to end the oppression of the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia was the building of a great system of defence works along our Western frontier. This has been done at top speed during the summer, and it has meant holding up most of my big building and development schemes all over the country, in order to concentrate half a million German workmen on the task. I would much rather these men were building workers' settlements, motor-roads, schools and public welfare institutions. But while the Sudeten question keeps Europe at fever-heat, I have got to be ready for any development. In the West we now have a line of fortifications that no army in the world could force."

"And Russia?" I asked.

"It is, of course, conceivable that Russia might stand behind Czecho-Slovakia," said Herr Hitler, "but I don't let that impress me. All these warlike preparations are madness," he went on, "for no one in Germany thinks of war with France or England. The fact that I have nevertheless taken measures on such a huge scale is the best proof of my determination to stop Czech oppression of the Sudetens.

"There seems to me to be a curious contradiction in the foreign policy of France," said Herr Hitler reflectively. "She was willing to give up the Saar, which bordered on her own territory, and had great political and economic importance for her. By doing so, she removed the last subject of discord between France and Germany, and greatly increased the popularity of the French in this country. But at the present moment there are people in France who are quite willing to start a world-war over Czecho-Slovakia, a land where she has no economic interests and no people of her own. I know it may be argued that the Czech Army and Air Force are useful to France as allied forces in Central Europe, but, believe me,

an army composed of so many different and mutually hostile races as exist in Czecho-Slovakia would be no good.

"The creation of that country after the war was the wildest folly. It has no sound scientific basis of existence as a national State, either ethnographically, strategically, economically or linguistically. What *are* the Czechs? They have never had an independent existence except during the Hussite Wars, when they ravaged and burnt far into Germany. They were the Bolsheviks of that time. Then the Germans stood up against them, and gave them such a beating that their brief independence disappeared.

"For hundreds of years, the Czech territory was a German principality, and the oldest German university was founded in Prague two centuries before the time of your Queen Elizabeth. It was the German used in the Government offices in Prague that became the official language of the Reich. Everything of value that Bohemia ever developed was derived from German strength.

"The artificial invention of Czecho-Slovakia would never have come about if Europe had not been divided by the last war. Its continuance depended on the same situation, so that it has always been the ambition of the Czech Government to keep the great European Powers at loggerheads. They have continually intrigued to stir up strife between Germany on the one hand and Britain and France on the other, because they knew that without this, their existence would come to an end—as it *will* come to an end if they show obstinacy now.

"The idea that the Czechs, with only a brief and precarious experience of independence, could rule over people with a thousand years of cultural history behind them like the Germans and the Hungarians was crazy. The Peace Conference pronounced Germany unworthy to rule over negroes in colonies," exclaimed Herr Hitler

bitterly, "while at the same time it put three and a half million Germans at the mercy of a lot of Czech police-spies. If a powerful Germany had then existed, this would have been impossible, and as soon as Germany became strong again, the Sudetens began to assert themselves. I tell you that the Sudetens despise the Czechs, and that the tyranny of Czechs over Germans is a thing that cannot and shall not endure. We publish only a part of what we know about Czech ill-usage of the Sudetens, for if we made known everything we could not hold our people.

"After all, there are plenty of precedents for remedying cases of incompatible authority. You British have granted autonomy to the Southern Irish, and Holland had to give up Belgium a hundred years ago. If the Czechs had possessed a great statesman, he would have realized how impossible it is to prolong the present intolerable position, and would long ago have let the Sudeten Germans join up with the Reich, being content to ensure by that means the continuance of Czech independent existence. But Dr. Benes is not a statesman; he is only a politician. I cannot imagine how it is that public opinion in Great Britain does not recognize the justice of the Sudeten German claims and the need of satisfying them in the general interest of Europe."

I remarked here that many people in England thought that German championship of the Sudetens was not the end, but the beginning, of a policy of expansion in Central Europe, and that Germany wanted to get a foothold in Czecho-Slovakia only because she aimed at opening the way to the oilfields of Rumania and the crops of the Ukraine.

Herr Hitler grunted impatiently. "I wish such people would look at a map," he said. "I don't need oilfields. I can manufacture oil on a huge scale in Germany. Besides, with a population of eighty millions, I shall have

so much to do to organize them and provide them with decent living conditions, that it would be madness to try to add other peoples to Germany."

"But even without annexing them," I said, "you might impose the principles of National Socialism upon them, and establish Germany's political influence throughout Central Europe."

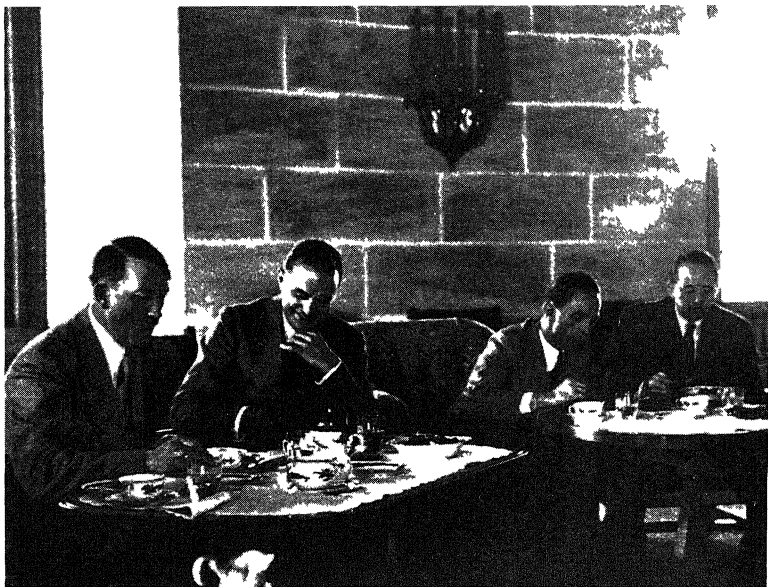
"That idea that we want to inoculate the whole world with our principles is simply absurd," retorted Herr Hitler. "National Socialist principles have done so much for Germany that we have not the slightest desire to export them. They are a fundamental advantage to our national strength. It is not Germany's political influence, but her economic influence that I want to extend. I can't get goods by exercising political pressure. I have got to pay for them or find a basis for economic exchange with their producers."

"What do people in England think of our economic policy?" put in Herr von Ribbentrop. "Do they understand it?"

"I am sure they don't," I answered. "To be perfectly frank, they regard your whole economic system as an example of window-dressing on a huge scale, and most of them expect to see it ultimately collapse."

"Well, it is no interest of Germany's that you should understand it," rejoined Herr Hitler. "As a matter of fact, many people in Germany don't understand it either. The fundamental difference between your economic policy and ours is that in England you work on a basis of capital, whereas the basis of the German system is productive labour."

"I was bound to invent a new economic system because when I came to power, after inflation and the world slump, practically no capital existed in Germany. I had a great task before me, so I had to devise new machinery for performing it. The effectiveness of that machinery can



AT TEA IN HERR HITLER'S NEW MOUNTAIN-TOP HOUSE ON THE KEHLSTEIN LEFT TO RIGHT HERR HITLER, THE AUTHOR, DR GOEBBELS, DR DIETRICH



THE TUNNEL LEADING TO THE LIFT INSIDE THE KEHLSTTIN

be judged by the results. As for your expectation of our collapse, I may say that the greatest economists in Germany have been foretelling it for the past six years, but they have given that up now because even experts cannot afford to go on being wrong for ever."

We rose at last from this long tea-party, and broke up into groups standing about the large saloon. Informal though the occasion was, I noticed that the members of his Government and staff showed to Herr Hitler the same discreet respect as would be paid in England to the King in similar circumstances. One could feel the domination of his personality in the atmosphere. Yet there was no sign in his bearing that he was consciously exerting it. On the contrary, the Führer's manner was lively and unrestrained. I heard him defending his vegetarian habits in a vigorous argument with Dr. Goebbels and Herr Himmler. Meat-eating, he maintained, was sheer brutality, and only another instance of how the most humane people would allow their better instincts to be overcome by greed. He gave an amusing imitation of a farmer's wife gushing over a small pig as a "sweet little animal" and plying it with tit-bits. "Day after day," he said, "she goes on fondling it and petting it until at last the dear little pig reaches a certain weight—and then, without the slightest compunction, a knife is stuck into its throat and it dies with a horrible squeal. And a few hours afterwards the same farmer's wife is eating it and saying how good it tastes."

Nor did I, the only foreigner among them, feel any sense of constraint among these rulers and high officials of Germany. I had met them on many occasions before and, now as then, nothing could have been more genial than their attitude. It needed a conscious effort to realize that the European War about which we had talked so much as a possibility would be, if it occurred, one in which they and I would be on different sides.

When at last we left this empyrean Chequers, getting into the great lift again and sinking through the inside of the mountain to the bronze-doored tunnel that led out to the waiting motor-cars, one had the sense of coming down from a place as peaceful and almost as imaginary as that Himalayan retreat of Shangri-la in the film "Lost Horizon." Up there, close to the blue sky, there had been a sense of Olympian calm which was sadly lacking in the world below.

CHAPTER XV

DANGEROUS HOURS AT GODESBERG

DURING the week-end following Mr. Chamberlain's visit, I was the only foreigner in touch with the central authority of the German Government. What I saw and heard left no doubt in my mind that it was determined to bring the Sudetens into the Reich and would, if necessary, face the risks of war to achieve that end.

Herr Hitler had gone too far to draw back even should he wish to do so. A Dictator who has repeatedly announced to those around him his fixed determination to follow a course of policy cannot afford to abandon it. And not only had the Führer declared his intention to annex the Sudetens, but he had fixed the date of October 1, not yet communicated to Mr. Chamberlain, as the time-limit within which this was to be accomplished.

His intentions were not embodied in words alone. All over Germany, officers and officials in positions of authority and confidence had been ordered to be ready for action on that day. Two thousand aeroplanes were waiting to begin the continuous bombing-attacks by which it was intended to destroy the bases of the Czecho-Slovak Air Force. Thirty-two divisions were ready to move on the three German frontiers of Czecho-Slovakia. To the 50 German divisions, containing some 600,000 men, which are permanently on what is practically a war-footing, the Führer had added another twenty divisions of reservists, called up inconspicuously by instalments. Including military formations of every kind and the Air Force, the

number of men under arms in Germany at this time was about $1\frac{1}{4}$ millions.

The Sudeten crisis of the autumn of 1938 falls into five parts. The first ended with the Hitler speech at Nuremberg on September 12. During that stage, the problem had been one between the Czech Government and the Sudeten leaders.

The second phase began with Hitler's entry into the ring, proclaimed in his speech in Nuremberg. This was immediately followed by the rupture of the negotiations between the Sudetens and Czechs, and the brief chapter ended with Mr. Chamberlain's visit to Berchtesgaden. At the time of that visit Hitler's demands had not gone officially beyond the claim of self-determination for the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia.

The third period of the crisis saw Germany encourage both Hungary and Poland to assert parallel pretensions. Signor Mussolini made speeches proclaiming Italy's intention to support the Reich, and proposing plebiscites for all minorities. Then the situation seemed to ease for a moment when, after a conference between the British and French Governments in London on September 18, the Czech Cabinet reluctantly promised to make the concessions recommended to it.

The fourth period began with the meeting of Hitler and Chamberlain at Godesberg on September 22, where the British Prime Minister was confronted with the demand for the immediate occupation by German troops on October 1 of the Sudeten area as marked upon a map. It was this sudden stiffening of the German attitude which brought the fourth phase to an end in the small hours of September 24, amid an atmosphere of crisis that made war seem all but inevitable.

The fifth and final phase was the most eventful and dramatic. Intensive war-preparations were carried out in Britain. Another Franco-British conference was held

in London. President Roosevelt issued a public appeal to Herr Hitler for moderation, and the Fuhrer delivered a violent attack upon Czecho-Slovakia and President Benes in his speech at the Sport Palace in Berlin. Then followed the dispatch of Sir Horace Wilson to Herr Hitler with a message from the Prime Minister, which at the moment seemed to lead to no result.

At the same time Mr. Chamberlain made another appeal to Herr Hitler for a continuance of the negotiations and invoked Signor Mussolini's support, with the result that while the Prime Minister was giving to the House of Commons an account of unsuccessful endeavours in the cause of peace, he received an invitation to meet the Führer again in Munich. This, in turn, led on to the Munich Agreement, which brought the Sudeten crisis to an end.

During the week-end following the departure of Mr. Chamberlain from Berchtesgaden on the morning of September 16, the Grand Hotel, which on the previous Thursday had been the most densely populated hostelry in Europe, relapsed into its accustomed calm. Except for Herr von Ribbentrop and his staff, only a handful of belated German holiday-makers remained as guests. I sat in the garden under the brilliant autumn sunshine, listening to the wireless news-messages from all over Europe which belied the atmosphere of tranquillity created by the snow-topped mountains that shut off the outside world from view. In the early evening the violet shadows crept gradually up the white slopes until they extinguished the last golden glow upon their summits, as if the powers of darkness were giving a nightly demonstration of the disappearance of the prospects of peace.

As I was leaving Berchtesgaden on the morning of Tuesday, September 20, for Godesberg, where Mr. Chamberlain was then expected the following day, two figures, well known to me, arrived at the little station, and, entering

the official motor-car that was waiting for them, drove straight up to Herr Hitler's villa. They were slender, shrewd-faced Dr. Imrédy and the white-haired, benign-looking M. de Kanya, Premier and Foreign Minister of Hungary.

Herr Hitler, having made up his mind to advance into Czecho-Slovakia at all costs, "*so oder so*," had sent for the chief Ministers of the Hungarian Government to offer them once more, though on less ample terms, the opportunity of collaborating with him in this operation.

Since the Führer had made his first proposal of that kind to the Regent of Hungary a month before, there had been a change in the international atmosphere. This was due to the plainly increasing probability that Britain and France would not go to war for Czecho-Slovakia.

As the risks of the German undertaking had thus decreased, the inducements offered to co-operate in it had been correspondingly reduced. This time it was not the whole of Slovakia that Herr Hitler suggested as the recompense of Hungarian action against Czecho-Slovakia, but only that southern part of it occupied by a solid Magyar population. Hungary agreed to the proposal, and that country's army was massed as rapidly as possible on the southern frontier of Czecho-Slovakia, which it did not actually cross until the crisis was over.

At the same time Poland concentrated troops near Teschen, a Slovak frontier-district containing 75,000 Poles, though the effect of this pressure on the Czech Government was partly countered by a threat from Russia to repudiate her pact of non-aggression with Poland if the latter invaded Czecho-Slovakian territory.

The most beautiful stretch of the Rhine lies between Coblenz and Bonn, and at the lower end of it, on the left bank, stands the charming little town of Godesberg—a sort of German Cheltenham, made up mainly of girls' schools and the villas of retired German officials. A

stranger arriving there the day before Mr. Chamberlain would have concluded that some public festivity was in preparation. The Union Jack and the German swastika flag hung alternately from tall masts along the bank of the river, and were draped from all the windows of the hotels and principal buildings. Triumphal arches of fir-branches decorated the main streets and the gangways of the two motor-ferries that crossed the Rhine. A golden autumn mist was hanging low over the great river, but the vineyards and forests of the Siebengebirge on the further bank were flooded with sunshine, and the ruined tower on the top of the Drachenfels, where, according to the Nibelungen legend, Siegfried slew the dragon, was outlined against a sky of cloudless blue.

The choice of Godesberg as the scene of the new conference was due to Herr Hitler's desire to do a good turn to his old friend, Fritz Dreesen, the proprietor of the hotel called by that name which stands on the bank of the Rhine in this little town. From the earliest days of his campaign, this hostelry has been Herr Hitler's favourite resort in the Rhineland, and he had stayed there some fifty times. But delightful as the Hotel Dreesen would be for an autumn holiday, Godesberg was hardly the most convenient place for an international conference, since the only other hotel suitable for lodging the Prime Minister and his staff was on the further side of the Rhine, with no means of communication but by ferry-boat, and stood on the top of a steep wooded hill a quarter of an hour by car from the river-bank.

This was the Hotel Petersberg, a massive, modern building belonging to Herr Peter Mühlens, a rich industrialist and racing-stable proprietor who owns the "4711" brand of eau-de-Cologne. From its terraces and broad balconies a beautiful panorama stretches from the twin towers of Cologne Cathedral, twenty miles away to the North, in a great arc that reaches far up the Rhine valley to the South.

Upon this little town of Godesberg descended, forty-eight

hours before the Premier's arrival, all the senior officials of the Führer's Chancellery and the Foreign Ministry to make arrangements for the meeting with German thoroughness. The Hotel Dreesen was taken over for Herr Hitler and his staff, and the principal wing of the Hotel Petersberg was cleared of its guests to make room for the British party, which was to consist of the Prime Minister, Sir Horace Wilson, Mr. Strang of the Foreign Office, Sir Nevile Henderson, British Ambassador in Berlin, Mr. I. A. Kirkpatrick, Councillor of Embassy there, and half a dozen junior officials of the Foreign Office and private secretaries.

Among the preparations for the Conference, it was even contemplated at one moment to have a bridge of boats thrown across the Rhine by the Pioneer Corps of the German Army, so as to shorten communications between the two hotels. But so many steamers are constantly passing up and down the river that the bridge would have had to be frequently opened, and it was decided to rely upon the two big motor-car ferries already in existence. A flotilla of police-boats was brought up to patrol the stream, and the largest passenger-vessel on the Rhine was requisitioned in case the possibility of a river-trip for Herr Hitler and his guest should arise during the proceedings.

On September 18, after consultations with the French Premier and Foreign Minister in London, Lord Halifax instructed the British and French Ministers in Prague to tell the Czech Government that it would definitely have to give up to Germany all the Sudeten areas where more than 50 per cent. of the population was German. In return for this, the British Government offered to guarantee the new boundaries against unprovoked aggression. By September 21, the Czech Government had agreed to abandon the Sudeten areas. The prospects were thus more promising than when Mr. Chamberlain had paid his first visit to Berchtesgaden the week before.

Herr Hitler, with Herr von Ribbentrop, Dr. Goebbels,

Dr. Paul Schmidt, and others arrived at Godesberg by the Führer's special train early on Thursday, September 22. The Prime Minister was not due at Cologne aerodrome till noon. Herr Hitler spent the morning sitting in the sunshine under the vine-grown trellis-work of the large garden of the Hotel Dreesen overlooking the Rhine, which the night before had been filled with an apparently care-free throng of dining and dancing Rhinelanders.

Directly the Führer arrived it became clear that the acceptance by the Czech Government of the Anglo-French recommendations to surrender the Sudeten areas had not ended the crisis. Those in Herr Hitler's confidence had begun to talk about a time-limit for the execution of this surrender.

"The Führer will not wait longer than a week," I was told. "Promises are not enough. The Sudeten areas must be handed over to Germany by the end of the present month or Hitler will take action."

It was with some foreboding, therefore, that I watched Mr. Chamberlain, looking tired but still smiling cheerfully, get out of his aeroplane at Cologne that Thursday morning. Herr von Ribbentrop met him, and this time the Foreign Minister's staff were all in civilian clothes, instead of in their S.S. uniforms as at Munich. There was a company of Herr Hitler's giant bodyguard, however, drawn up at the aerodrome to salute him with dipped colours and a roll of drums.

All the schoolchildren in Cologne had been given a holiday, and were strung along the grass-bordered concrete road leading up the Rhine. A place was reserved for a group who were British subjects by birth, being sons and daughters of British soldiers married to German girls during the Allied Occupation, whose wives and children have remained there.

The Prime Minister did not go straight to Godesberg, but drove across the Rhine by the bridge at Bonn and up to his hotel to take lunch. After the meal he and his

staff came down in some of the fourteen Mercédès cars placed at their disposition, and crossed by the motor-ferry to meet Herr Hitler at the Hotel Dreesen at four o'clock.

In the Führer's little sitting-room, opening on to a terrace overlooking the Rhine, Mr. Chamberlain sat down alone with Herr Hitler and Dr. Paul Schmidt, the interpreter, to explain what had passed, since their last meeting, between the British and French Governments on one side and the Czech Government on the other.

To the Prime Minister's surprise, Herr Hitler declared that, although the Czechs had agreed to hand over the Sudeten areas, he was not yet satisfied. He knew too well, he said, the Czech capacity for evasion and delay, and he demanded the instant evacuation of the whole Sudeten area by the Army and Government officials, which was to be followed by the immediate entry of German troops. Moreover, the Czechs in their retirement were to leave the Sudeten area entirely intact, removing nothing. The Führer had had a map prepared on which was marked out the area which he thus proposed to take over at once from Czecho-Slovakia.

As Mr. Chamberlain afterwards told the House of Commons, he found himself confronted with "a totally unexpected situation." He had thought that when once the principle of transferring the Sudeten areas had been conceded by the Czech Government, Herr Hitler would be content to discuss the ways and means of carrying this out. Instead, he found that Herr Hitler had drawn up his own plan of action, which he intended to carry out *so oder so*—peacefully if the Czechs withdrew before his advancing troops, forcibly if they did not. This attitude created the danger that, though the transfer of the Sudetens was agreed in principle, the Germans might still resort to force if the procedure dictated by them were not accepted.

The bad turn which the negotiations had taken was not known to the outside world until next day. At 7.15 p.m. Mr. Chamberlain left the Dreesen Hotel, which was entirely cut off by a ring of black-uniformed sentries. In the darkness of the evening, he drove along the riverside promenade to the motor-ferry, amid loud cries of "Heil Chamberlain!" from cheerful German onlookers of all ages who had been waiting for hours to see him pass.

His preoccupied expression when he reached the Hotel Petersberg gave the cue to the journalists waiting in the hall that there had been a hitch in these renewed negotiations. The Prime Minister went up to his rooms, and Sir Horace Wilson shortly came downstairs again with a brief statement which he gave to representatives of the British Press with a request to see that it was at once communicated to the German newspapers also.

This was an appeal to everyone concerned with the Czecho-Slovak problem "to refrain from action of any kind that would be likely to lead to incidents." It was not explained what had given rise to the apprehension that incidents were likely. Only later on did it become clear that this was the generalization of a similar request which Mr. Chamberlain had made to Herr Hitler that he should not move his troops at least so long as the Prime Minister was in Germany.

On either side of the Rhine, some three miles apart in a direct line, were the two men in whose hands lay the solution of this grave crisis. While the Prime Minister, from the big buhl desk in his sitting-room at the Hotel Petersberg was talking anxiously to members of his Cabinet over the direct telephone-line to London, and while Herr Hitler with his Ministers and staff sat long at dinner in the garden of the Hotel Dreesen, the people of Godesberg gave themselves up to admiring the illumination of the hill-tops beyond the Rhine.

An excellent dinner had been prepared for Mr. Chamberlain and his staff, consisting of cream soup, boiled trout,

and tournedos, with *pâté de foie gras*. With it were served the famous Rhine wine *Johannisberger Erntebinger* and German champagne of the Henkell brand, followed by a glass of port. But agreeable though the surroundings of the Godesberg Conference were, gloom was settling more deeply every hour upon the British Delegation.

The next day, Friday, September 23, lives in my memory as even more critical than those which followed during that last memorable week of September, 1938. Mr. Chamberlain had been expected to come down for another talk with Herr Hitler. At 11 o'clock the cars were waiting in front of his hotel, and instructions had been sent to clear the road to the ferry. A crowd of spectators had gathered on a garden slope facing the main entrance of the hotel, and the S.S. sentries at the door were standing rigid as stone figures.

But instead of going over to Godesberg the Prime Minister wrote a letter to Herr Hitler, which reached the Hotel Dreesen just before noon. In this Mr. Chamberlain protested that the proposal for the immediate occupation of the Sudeten area had put him in a very difficult position, because it would look as if the transfer of the Sudeten areas as recommended by the Anglo-French communication and already accepted by the Czech Government, had actually been accomplished by force.

He pointed out that the Czechs might resist, which would destroy the hope which he and Herr Hitler had formed at Berchtesgaden that the question would be settled peacefully. As a compromise, the Prime Minister suggested that he should urge the Czechs to withdraw their troops, but that the preservation of order should be left to the Sudeten Germans themselves without any immediate entry of German forces.

For three and a half hours after this letter had been carried down the winding road from the Hotel Petersberg, the atmosphere was one of suspense and rumour.

The Hotel Godesberg, the largest in the town, had been reserved by the German Press Department for the newspaper correspondents. At an international conference so curiously planned it was difficult to know where was the best place to stay. On the first day of the conference, I had rooms at all three of the hotels concerned, though I was soon cut off from the Hotel Dreesen by a sudden cancellation of the official tickets of admission, so rigorous that Herr Dreesen himself was for a time kept out of his own establishment.

Most of the foreign correspondents spent that warm autumn day of September 23 waiting on the balconies and terraces of the Hotel Godesberg, overlooking the Rhine ferry. The flood of rumour which poured out from that hotel to all parts of Europe was continuous but conflicting. Complete mystery surrounded the disagreement between the British and German negotiators.

At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon Dr. Paul Schmidt, Herr Hitler's interpreter, was seen to drive down to the ferry bearing a large quarto envelope which looked as if it might contain an official document. All that could be learned from German sources was that this was a reply to Mr. Chamberlain's letter of the same morning.

News meanwhile arrived that the Hodza cabinet in Czecho-Slovakia had been replaced by a new Government headed by General Syrový, the Inspector General of the Czech Army, and it was reported that he had ordered a reoccupation of the Sudeten area, from which Czech troops had withdrawn two days before. All through that sunny afternoon of Friday, September 23, despondency deepened.

As a matter of fact, the letter from Herr Hitler to Mr. Chamberlain did not advance matters much beyond the point reached the night before. The Führer set forth again at length the case for the Sudeten Germans, who, he declared, had for nearly two decades been "maltreated, tortured, economically destroyed and, above all, prevented

from realizing for themselves the right to self-determination." He refused to attach any importance to the Prime Minister's assurance that the transfer of the Sudeten territory to the Reich had already been approved by the Czech Government in principle, basing this attitude on the ground that President Wilson's Fourteen Points had also been recognized in principle, but had been "in practice broken in the most shameful way." He ended by declaring that if any further obstacle were raised "to the clear rights of Germans in Czecho-Slovakia," Germany was "determined to exhaust the other possibilities alone remaining open to her."

The Prime Minister, who had spent the early part of the afternoon walking up and down with Sir Nevile Henderson on the terrace overlooking the Rhine Valley, set himself to consider this reply, with Dr. Schmidt as translator and expounder. The Führer's unyielding attitude was bitterly disappointing but he faced up to the new situation, and, with his own hand, drafted a short letter which he sent by Sir Horace Wilson and Sir Nevile Henderson to Herr von Ribbentrop for delivery to the German Chancellor.

This message said that the only thing Mr. Chamberlain could do was to put the German demand for instant occupation of the Sudeten areas before the Czech Government. For that purpose, the Prime Minister asked that he should be given a plain account of Germany's request in writing together with a map of the area which it was proposed to occupy. He would forward this to Prague and he asked that until an answer had been received nothing should be done by German forces to prejudice the issue.

Since acceptance or refusal of the German proposals now lay with the Czecho-Slovak Government, said the Prime Minister, there was nothing more to do in Godesberg, and he would go home to report to his colleagues and the French Government what had occurred.

At the time, it was impossible to follow these developments. The Prime Minister and his staff remained inaccessible at the Hotel Petersberg. As for the Hotel Dreesen, it was entirely cut off from the outside world. Even could one have penetrated this Nazi Holy of Holies, very few within knew the nature of the exchange of diplomatic communications across the Rhine. Except for Herr Hitler, Herr von Ribbentrop, Dr. Schmidt and possibly Dr. Goebbels and Dr. Dietrich, the Heads of the Propaganda and Press Departments, no one on the German side was in the secret of the negotiations.

The political barometer all over Europe was sinking in presage of coming storm. About 8 o'clock in the evening, I got through by telephone to a German official at the Hotel Dreesen to ask if he had any idea of what was going on. "Not the slightest," was his reply. "But from the look of the few people who do know, I should say that there is still hope of a settlement. There is no atmosphere of crisis here."

For want of other information, I telephoned this remark to London, motoring into Bonn to do so, since the pressure on the lines at Godesberg made communication impossible.

"Well, that is the only message with a glimmer of hope in it that has reached us," said the Night Editor of *The Daily Mail*. "From every part of Germany we are getting gloomy news—troops marching, and ordinary trains held up to make way for military transport. The Czech Army is being mobilized. The whole show looks as though it is going to start at once. When are you getting out of Germany yourself? It won't be a good place for an Englishman after the Prime Minister has left."

I think the German telephone-operator at the desk outside had been listening. "Is it war?" he asked anxiously as I paid for the call.

"I don't know. London seems to think it may be."

The man buried his face in his hands. "I can't face it again," he said. "I was in the last war and I am still

liable for service." It was the first sign I had seen in Germany of realization that the situation might turn to international tragedy.

Back to Godesberg, fifteen miles away, I drove. There was a report that Mr. Chamberlain was coming down to see Herr Hitler late that evening. At 10.30 p.m. he crossed the Rhine and drove to the Hotel Dreesen, the guards presenting arms as he stepped out of the car under the portico. It was still impossible to get admission to the building where the whole future of Europe was being decided. One could only pace up and down in the darkness outside, waiting.

An hour passed, and another. What could have happened to prolong this midnight conversation after both sides had avoided personal contact all day? I could visualize the scene in the Führer's suite on the other side of the hotel, which I had visited before the conference met—the little room, furnished in late Victorian style, where he would be sitting on the couch against the wall; the round table in front of him covered with maps and papers. On the other side of the table Mr. Chamberlain in an armchair; between them the burly, round-faced figure of Dr. Schmidt, through whose lips alone the two could communicate.

In the long, narrow room adjoining, furnished as a council-chamber, with a green baize table that was never used, would be sitting the studious figure of Sir Horace Wilson, the tall, lean, well-dressed form of Sir Nevile Henderson, black-uniformed Herr von Ribbentrop and probably Dr. Dietrich, the head of the German Press, waiting for some communication from that room within.

Dr. Dietrich! He, at any rate, would surely know at least the temper in which the discussion was proceeding, for he is the most alert of men. By the light of an arc-lamp outside the hotel, soon after midnight, I wrote a note to him on the back of my card:



Sport & General

THE GRAVEST HOUR AT GODESBERG MR CHAMBERLAIN LEAVES THE
HOTEL DREESEN AT 1 30 a m , SEPTEMBER 24, 1938

"The whole world seems to be expecting war," I said. "If these fears are unjustified, it is a pity to let them spread at a time when to-morrow morning's newspapers are going to press. Can you not give me some idea as to the turn things are taking?"

I persuaded a sentry to pass this message back into the hotel, and for a quarter of an hour continued my vigil in the darkness. Then, to my relief, I saw the figures of Dr. Dietrich and Dr. Boehmer, the Head of the Foreign Relations Department of the Propaganda Ministry, appear in the lighted entrance, and come down the short drive to where I stood beyond the sentries.

"Have you any idea what the real position is?" I said to them. "To-day's mysterious proceedings seem to have convinced everyone that war is on the point of breaking out."

"I know," said Dr. Dietrich, "but I assure you that the Führer and the Prime Minister are both set on peace, and that to-morrow we shall have to start repairing the damage done by the scare-reports that are circulating to-night."

"What is going on in there?" I asked. "For twenty-four hours there has been no news at all, so that it is not surprising that people should be worried."

"What's going on is that Hitler and Chamberlain are preparing peace, not war," replied the German Press Chief emphatically. "It is a question of procedure, not principle, that divides them."

At 1.30 in the morning the British party at last left the Dreesen Hotel and were ferried once more across the swirling Rhine to draft their reports and get a few hours' sleep before flying back to London.

War still continued to loom as a dark possibility on the horizon. All that Mr. Chamberlain had done was to undertake to transmit to the Czech Government the new German demand for the immediate handing-over of the

Sudeten area and its contents, but now the situation was more critical than it had been at Berchtesgaden. For attached to the new German demand was a time-limit due to expire exactly one week from the morning when the Prime Minister got into his London-bound aeroplane at Cologne.

Yet the atmosphere of his send-off from the aerodrome was free from any noticeable strain, and the anxiety that had been so intense at midnight seemed to have disappeared in the bright sunshine of that late September morning. Two things accounted for the calm prevailing in Germany throughout these critical times. One was the concentration of authority in the hands of Herr Hitler. Having no Cabinet with which to discuss, no Parliament to which to report and no need to concert action with his fellow-Dictator, Mussolini, in the same way as the British Premier was bound to keep in touch with the French Premier, the Führer bore in his own person all the responsibilities of the Reich. His closest collaborators had only to carry out the orders that he gave. They were free from the necessity of making up their minds on matters of high policy.

As for the public at large, it simply did not realize the perils piling up in Europe. Control of the Press and the wireless prevented the ordinary German from seeing the situation in its international aspect. For weeks indignant accounts of Czech oppression of the Sudetens had been thrust before his eyes and drummed into his ears. This situation the Führer would now rectify, and confidence both in his capacity and his justification for settling it was so complete that the possibility of disastrous ulterior consequences was overlooked. It was not until the very eve of the Munich meeting in the following week that the nation as a whole realized how close Europe had been brought to war by this Czecho-Slovak crisis.

I left Germany that afternoon by motor-car for London via the Hook of Holland, passing across Belgian and

Dutch territory. The drive revealed how close-shut was the watertight compartment in which the Germans lived. Directly one crossed the Belgian frontier, the signs of an imminent general war became manifest. Newly mobilized troops were everywhere moving by road and rail. Even in Northern Belgium, presumably as a precaution against a swoop through Holland, I found soldiers mining the roads, lowering yellow canisters of high explosive into holes past which motor-cars crept at walking pace.

On Dutch territory the same expectation was manifest. Grey-clad infantrymen were billeted in all farm-houses for a mile or two inside the frontier. And in England next morning one found an atmosphere very different from the easy-going optimism of Germany.

That week-end M. Daladier and M. Bonnet, the French Premier and Foreign Minister, had again arrived in London, accompanied by General Gamelin, Chief of the General Staff. The French journalists who accompanied them were, as is customary in that country, closely in their confidence. One of them, whose sources of information I knew to be excellent, told me that the Premier had asked General Gamelin for a statement as to the readiness of France for war. To this the Chief of the General Staff had replied:

"Our Air Force is in a bad condition. It has 1,300 first-line machines, of which only 400 are modern. The Army is good, but before I deal with its preparedness for war I must ask 'Where is the battlefield to be?'"

"The French Army cannot force the Siegfried Line; nor can the German Army force the Maginot Line. If Italy is to be among our enemies, I shall allow myself the luxury of invading her territory. If not, the only field in which I can see the Army being actively employed is Spain. I should recommend the immediate invasion of Spain for the purpose of establishing a line of communication with North Africa, to enable our colonial forces

to be brought over without having to run the gauntlet of Italian submarines and aircraft in the Mediterranean."

Limited though the possibilities of military action in Europe appeared to be, M. Daladier and M. Bonnet informed the British Government that if Czecho-Slovakia were attacked on October 1, as Herr Hitler had threatened, France would fulfil her treaty obligations to that State, and the British Prime Minister assured the French Ministers that in such an eventuality Britain would support the French forces. An inspired statement to this effect was issued to the British Press on September 26.

Gravity was lent to these assurances by the fact that, on the evening of Sunday, September 25, the Czech Government, through its Minister in London, declared that the demands that Herr Hitler had communicated to Mr. Chamberlain in Godesberg were "absolutely and unconditionally unacceptable." Complete deadlock appeared to have been reached, and the first day of the fateful week which then seemed to separate Europe from another Great War had already gone.

On Monday, September 26, the French and British Ministers in London received communication of a message which President Roosevelt had addressed to Herr Hitler and Dr. Benes the day before, appealing to them to continue negotiations for "a peaceful, fair and constructive settlement."

The Prime Minister decided to follow this up by dispatching to Berlin Sir Horace Wilson, who had been with him at Berchtesgaden and Godesberg.

Herr Hitler was to make a speech on the international situation in the vast Berlin "Sport Palace," and Sir Horace Wilson took with him a message from Mr. Chamberlain urging the Führer not to say anything which would make the international situation more acute. No doubt other messages of a similar kind reached him, for the whole world was in a state of acute apprehension lest the Führer's

words might amount to a declaration of war against Czecho-Slovakia which would unleash the forces of destruction that every country was preparing for instant action.

One such message came from Viscount Rothermere, who in the past had done more, perhaps, than any other Englishman to urge a better understanding with the new regime in Germany while there was yet time to achieve it.

"My dear Führer," he telegraphed. "You have had proofs of my friendship towards Germany, and I am confident you will not resent it if I venture respectfully to appeal to you before you speak to-night. Peace and war are in the balance, and, like you, I know what are the horrors of war, for, as you are aware, I lost two of my three sons in the last war. A hopeful word from you would bring relief to millions. Yours very sincerely, Rothermere."

Meanwhile Sir Horace Wilson had arrived in Berlin. The letter which he brought informed Herr Hitler that the international situation had been made much graver by the refusal of the Czechs to entertain the demand for the complete and unconditional surrender of the Sudeten territory by October 1. The Prime Minister proposed that, to find some compromise, a conference should be called, at which representatives of the German and Czech Governments should state their demands and objections in the presence of British and French delegates.

Sir Horace Wilson was taken to the Reichskanzlei by the Ambassador, Sir Neville Henderson, and the Counsellor of the British Embassy, Mr. I. A. Kirkpatrick. Herr Hitler received them in his large room, wearing a moody and sullen expression. It was with a gesture almost of impatience that he opened the Prime Minister's letter, which was accompanied by a German translation supplied by the British Embassy.

When he had read it, his answer was curt. He had spoken his last word, he said, in the memorandum which he had given to Mr. Chamberlain at Godesberg; a con-

ference would mean procrastination, and he would have nothing to do with the suggestion to hold one now.

The Prime Minister's envoy took his leave, asking only that he might call again before returning to London the following morning so that he could make a report corresponding to the latest phase of the situation.

The Führer's speech that night began with a defence of Nazi policy, which Herr Hitler declared had aimed consistently at peace so far as was compatible with German rights. He recalled that before beginning rearmament he had offered to agree to the limitation of forces, including air-fleets; abolition of bombing, of gas warfare and of heavy guns; and the neutralization of territory outside the zone of war. He instanced, as a proof of his desire for peace, his non-aggression pact with Poland, his guarantee of the integrity of the States on Germany's Western frontier, and his Naval Agreement with Great Britain.

The rest of his harangue was devoted to a furious attack upon the origins and policy of the Czecho-Slovak Government, with which he associated, as specifically responsible, Dr. Benes, the Czech President.

The Godesberg memorandum, the Führer said, was his final proposal. He intended to bring under German rule the whole of the region in Czecho-Slovakia predominantly populated by Germans. Where such manifest predominance did not exist, he would agree to a plebiscite, and he startled his listeners in Great Britain by announcing that he would accept an offer made by the British Legion to keep order in the plebiscite area while the vote was being taken.

Summing up the whole situation, Herr Hitler said:

"Two men face each other, Herr Benes and I. I have made Herr Benes an offer. It is nothing more than the execution of what he has already accepted. Now he has peace or war in his hands. We are determined. Herr Benes can choose."

This powerful dramatization of the situation as a conflict between two personalities, the Führer of the German Reich and the President of the Czecho-Slovak Republic, left the door open for another intervention by the Prime Minister. He instructed Sir Horace Wilson in Berlin to tell Herr Hitler that the British Government would guarantee the execution by the Czechs of their promise to transfer the Sudeten area to Germany, given after the Berchtesgaden conversation. If, despite this guarantee, Herr Hitler continued to insist upon his time-limit of October 1, Sir Horace Wilson was directed to inform him that the French Ministers in London had stated their intention to stand by Czecho-Slovakia in the event of a German attack, and that, in such a case, Great Britain would support France.

The next morning, which was Tuesday, September 27, Sir Horace Wilson went to see Herr Hitler again. He found that the Führer had prepared a long letter to Mr. Chamberlain, denouncing the Czech objections to the Godesberg memorandum as unfounded and procrastinating and that there was no change in the German Chancellor's determination to occupy the Sudeten area by October 1 at the latest.

Upon this, the British Premier's representative communicated the message which he had been ordered to deliver as to Britain's intention to stand by France, if France went to the support of the Czechs against a German attack.

This was the first moment, in the course of this complicated European crisis at which official allusion was made to that danger of a general war which, outside Germany at least, had from the first been present in the minds of all. It was in an attitude of grim determination that Herr Hitler received the British warning.

"I understand the position perfectly," he said to Sir Horace Wilson. "If we invade Czecho-Slovakia and France attacks us, Great Britain will attack us also. I may

say that I am quite ready to face that contingency, and I see no point in continuing these negotiations any further."

The Führer strode past his visitor towards the door, but turned before he reached it and said:

"I can only add that if, by 2 p.m. to-morrow, the Czech Government has not accepted my demands, I shall order general mobilization in Germany and proceed to take such measures as seem necessary."

The evening of Tuesday, September 27, on which Sir Horace Wilson returned to London was the supreme moment of the whole crisis. Complete deadlock had been reached. The Czechs had refused Germany's demands. Germany had issued a dated ultimatum. Britain and France had stated that they would intervene if that ultimatum were carried out. The Führer had made a defiant answer. A great European war appeared as close as it had been at the end of July, 1914. British subjects in Germany were leaving by every available train and aeroplane. Those who went by motor-car found the great *Autostrassen* filled with interminable columns of troops. Near the frontiers the roads were screened against aircraft, and freshly-dug trenches stretched across the fields.

All over Britain preparations were being made in an atmosphere which combined consternation at the sudden approach of catastrophe with characteristic calm in carrying out measures to meet it.

Arrangements were hurriedly made to evacuate as many children as possible from London. By day and night, the digging of shelter-trenches in public parks and private gardens was going on. The Royal Navy was already at its war-stations, with the Reserve Fleet mobilized. About the Air Force and anti-aircraft defence misgivings prevailed which, as shown by subsequent revelations, were well founded. When the Prime Minister addressed the nation and the Empire in a broadcast message, he was speaking to a country which felt, with grim resignation,

that it was seeing the materialization of a peril whose presence it had long felt.

During the months that followed this time of acute tension, the theory was often advanced that if Mr. Chamberlain had done nothing more, the danger would have evaporated of itself. The German position, it was contended had been based on bluff, and would have been abandoned after it became clear that Britain and France were determined to stand by Czecho-Slovakia in resisting a forcible occupation of Sudeten territory.

No one in contact with official German quarters would accept this theory. The Nazi Government certainly wanted no European war over the Sudeten question, but the risk of provoking one was the price of a settlement on its own terms. That risk had been accepted, and withdrawal at the last moment was impossible. The authority of a Dictatorship depends upon prestige, and no such regime could have survived the last-minute abandonment of a position so publicly, definitely and emphatically assumed.

It must further be remembered that the dread of war in Germany is largely confined to the middle-aged people who remember the sufferings of the last campaign, and the disaster and despair that followed on defeat. The younger generation, upon which the fighting fortunes of the country would chiefly depend, has been subjected to continuous propaganda for building up a supreme belief in its own powers, and developing a spirit of patriotic sacrifice. Nowhere else is such systematic encouragement given to the activities of youth, and the self-confidence and discipline thus developed would have steeled Germany for the trial of war.

From the enthusiasm with which, in the concluding stages of the crisis, Mr. Chamberlain was hailed as the preserver of peace, the deduction has been drawn that if the Czech Government, supported by Britain and France, had hardened its heart, and Herr Hitler had proceeded

to put his war-plans into operation, they would have been obstructed by some great manifestation of public opinion in favour of peace. I believe this to be an illusion. In the first place, the administrative machine in Germany is too strong for any effective resistance to the will of the Government. An elaborately subdivided system of political intelligence keeps every individual in the country under the supervision of a trusted agent of the National Socialist Party, whose duty it is to know his political outlook and individual character. This network of control would provide the information necessary to suppress disaffection in its earliest stages, even without the martial law imposed by a state of war. For popular feeling to resist the will of a strong authoritarian Government, preliminary propaganda and arrangements for concerted action would be necessary. All the machinery in Germany that might be used for such a purpose is under direct Government control.

But, apart altogether from the material difficulties obstructing the development of any anti-war movement within Germany, there were no signs that the policy of her Government with regard to Czecho-Slovakia had aroused anxiety. Confidence in the Führer remained unshaken. On two previous occasions—the occupation of the Rhineland and the annexation of Austria—the German people had seen him act in opposition to the Western Powers. In each instance he had carried his purpose through without unpleasant consequences. Grave though the outlook was at the beginning of that last week of September, the German people felt sure that their Leader knew what he was doing, and that his record of success would be continued. The ovations which greeted Mr. Chamberlain at Munich when the crisis was over were not inspired by gratitude to him for saving Germany from war by taking up an attitude of opposition to Herr Hitler, but for his agreement to the peaceful fulfilment of the Führer's aims.

Future historians may speculate as to whether the decisive factor in bringing about the concluding phase of the crisis was the announcement that the British Fleet had been mobilized, or the final appeal addressed that same evening by Mr. Chamberlain to Hitler, both direct and through Mussolini, begging him to agree to another meeting for discussion of the method by which the Sudeten areas should be handed over.

From President Roosevelt came independently and almost simultaneously a similar message urging a renewal of negotiations with the assurance that "Should you agree to a solution in this peaceful manner, I am convinced that hundreds of millions throughout the world would recognize your action as an outstanding historic service to all humanity."

The House of Commons, at ten minutes to three that Wednesday afternoon, was filled to the last available inch not only with Members but with a great host of onlookers. The whole country believed that war was practically inevitable. The Speaker's Chaplain, Dr. Alan C. Don, had obtained permission to add to the usual opening prayers a special prayer for guidance. He had chosen for this purpose the collect for the first Sunday after Epiphany, which reads:

"O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully to receive the prayers of Thy people which call upon Thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ Our Lord.—AMEN."

It was the inclusion of this extra prayer which, by delaying the start of the Prime Minister's speech for a few moments, enabled the message from Herr Hitler, accepting another conference at Munich next day, to reach him just before he sat down.

The telegram from Berlin had been typed out in the Foreign Office, and copies of it were swiftly sent over to

Lord Halifax and Sir Horace Wilson in the galleries of the House of Commons. Lord Halifax passed the message down to Lord Dunglass, the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary, on the floor of the House, and he, in turn, handed it along the tightly-packed Treasury Bench to Sir John Simon, who sat next to the place where the Prime Minister was standing at the dispatch-box.

"Shall I tell them now?" whispered Mr. Chamberlain after he had broken off his speech for a full minute to study the message.

"Yes," urged the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

And so, within a few moments, the whole situation underwent that dramatic change which led on to its final phase the following day at Munich.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CLIMAX AT MUNICH

Not often is practically the entire British Cabinet to be seen in public at 8 o'clock in the morning, but that was the case at Heston aerodrome on Thursday, September 29. Lord Halifax was there with Sir John Simon, Sir Samuel Hoare, Sir Thomas Inskip, Lord Hailsham, Sir Kingsley Wood, Mr. Oliver Stanley, Mr. Hore-Belisha, Mr. W. S. Morrison—eighteen ministers in all—and a few dozen other well-known people who had risen early to wish the Prime Minister success in the mission upon which so much depended.

Lord Halifax was anxious that the success of the Premier's journey to Munich should not be endangered by any impression that Herr Hitler's agreement to the meeting was regarded as a triumph for the British Government. Conspicuous along the road down to Heston that morning had been the contents bills of a London newspaper—"HITLER SEES THE RED LIGHT."

"If you hear any reference to that in Germany to-day," said Lord Halifax, beckoning me over, "tell them that it does not at all represent the point of view of the British public."

The Prime Minister's machine landed in Munich at 11.50 a.m., a quarter of an hour or so before I arrived there. He had gone straight to the Führerbau, one of the big new buildings on the Königsplatz which Herr Hitler has erected as the headquarters of the National Socialist Party.

Large flags of all four of the nations whose political heads were within hung from its windows, and in the Führer's spacious room upstairs, Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier had already begun their conversations. As regards the two Dictators, these had been preceded by a talk in the train on the way from Kufstein, to which town, on the former frontier between Germany and Austria, the Führer had travelled overnight to meet the Duce, who brought with him his son-in-law, Count Ciano. Mussolini had already drafted a formula of agreement to submit to Hitler, and he took a leading part in the subsequent discussions.

Mr. Chamberlain was the last to arrive at the Führerbau at about 12.15 p.m. Without any further delay the conversations began. After an hour or so they were suspended for a few minutes while the statesmen took a cup of soup and a sandwich at a buffet which had been set up in an anteroom, but not until three o'clock, when agreement had been reached in principle, did the British and French Premiers go to their respective hotels for lunch, leaving Signor Mussolini to return with Herr Hitler to his flat.

I was in the restaurant of the Hotel Vierjahreszeiten when Field-Marshal Goering and Baron von Neurath, who had been at the Führerbau, though not actually taking part in the discussions, came in.

"It is all right. They have come to a settlement," said the Marshal, and went on to show particular admiration for the attitude which M. Daladier had displayed. It was the first time that Goering had met the French Premier, who seemed to have impressed him by his readiness to come to a final decision on the spot, without any further reference to the Czech Government or consultation of his own colleagues in Paris.

The Marshal asked me to sit down at his table, where he had a party consisting of Frau Goering and another

lady, as well as Baron von Neurath and several generals of his staff. The fact that war had been avoided was the natural subject of the conversation, and Marshal Goering's comment on that topic doubtless reflected the views which had encouraged Germany to maintain her demands in the face of such a risk.

"What, after all, could Britain have done for Czecho-Slovakia if it had come to war?" he asked. "Your warships could not have steamed up the Elbe to her rescue; your army practically does not exist, and in the air," he exclaimed, bringing his fist down upon the table, "I am the master!"

I said that if war had once begun, the actual reason for it would probably soon have been forgotten, and after five or six years all the countries concerned would have been asking themselves what had started it.

"Do you think it would have lasted so long?" interjected Baron von Neurath.

I answered that all wars in which Britain became involved seemed to last a long time, to which the reply was made, "I do not think this would have been the same. You might have had a surprise in that respect."

At half-past four that afternoon, the conference began again and continued till midnight, with only a short interval for dinner. The proceedings were prolonged by the necessity of everything being translated into German, English and French. Mussolini's and Ciano's knowledge of these languages enabled them to dispense with an Italian version.

The discussion ended with the signature of an agreement providing for the evacuation of the Sudeten area and its occupation by German troops, to begin on Saturday, October 1, the next day but one, and be completed by October 10. An International Commission was to decide in what territories a plebiscite was necessary. It was further laid down that the Czecho-Slovak Government

would release Sudetens serving in the Czech Army and police force, together with all political prisoners. The document ended with the reaffirmation of the British and French Governments' offer to guarantee the new boundaries of Czecho-Slovakia, in which Germany and Italy undertook to join when the question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in that country had been settled. Should this settlement not be reached within three months, the four Heads of Governments at Munich agreed to meet again.

Long after midnight, the streets of Munich were lined with people waiting to see Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier drive back from the Fuhrerbau to their hotels. Black-uniformed S.S. men lined the roadway, having been on duty continuously since noon. When at last the two Premiers appeared, cheers from German throats were the first expression that they heard of the world's universal joy that there was to be no war.

The hall of the Regina Hotel was packed when the Prime Minister entered it at about 1.0 a.m. Journalists stood thick even upon the staircase leading to the floor above. The tumult of the crowd outside followed him through the swing-doors. The atmosphere was entirely one of enthusiasm and congratulation. The avoidance of the war which had been so desperately near filled all minds. The terms by which this had been achieved seemed at the moment of secondary importance. Only later did the realization that the threat of force had been the decisive factor in this greatest international crisis since the war begin to moderate the delight inspired by escape from disaster.

It was very late when anyone even remotely connected with the Munich Conference went to bed that night. At 3 a.m. Herr von Ribbentrop was sitting at a round table in the hall of the Hotel Vierjahreszeiten with half a dozen members of his staff. His face wore a broad smile,



Wide World Photos

MUSSOLINI ARRIVES AT MUNICH, SEPTEMBER 29, 1938

which I thought had in it a suggestion of triumph. If so, it was justified, for the German Foreign Minister had always taken the view that Britain and France would not fight to oppose German demands on Czecho-Slovakia. This had proved to be correct, though in London, a couple of days earlier, I should not have felt very sure of it myself.

That was a night of relief and happiness all over the world. In Germany there was more cause for these emotions than elsewhere, for the Führer had won his way in its entirety. Once more, the map of Europe was to be altered exactly on the lines that he had laid down. That "will" to which the Nazis attribute the success of their struggle for power had been asserted in the larger field of international politics and had won through.

Without agreeing to any compromise, condition or compensation, Herr Hitler had ridden roughshod over all appeals, representations, protests and threats, whether from Europe or from the United States. Yet, whatever the cost, one could only feel deep thankfulness that peace had been preserved, since Britain, as a result of years of neglect of armaments under the MacDonald and Baldwin Governments, still remained entirely unready for war.

In every British mind, however, the realization was growing that peace could not be maintained for ever by surrender to the will of Germany. Admirable as the German character is in many aspects, regard for the feelings and indulgence for the deficiencies of other countries are not conspicuous features of it. Especially do the young and early-middle-aged men who make up the inner councils of the Nazi regime respect strength and despise feebleness. They had long suspected that Britain was weak—not, of course, in ultimate resources, but in forces immediately available for war; weak by reason of general reluctance to submit to discipline, and of sluggish national machinery.

Their attitude with regard to Britain might be compared with that of a powerful young prize-fighter in first-

rate condition towards a former champion who has allowed himself to go out of training but still claims the prestige of a long sequence of past victories. It was founded in respect, but might easily turn to jealousy or even defiance—for the sparring-match which had just ended at Munich had done much to justify their claim to the championship-belt.

The Ministers and officials of the German Government confined their public statements to expressions of gratification that Chamberlain and Daladier had recognized the justice of their cause.

"I suppose Germany will regard this settlement as a triumph?" I said to Marshal Goering, in an interview I had with him next morning.

"Yes—not as a triumph for herself, but as a triumph for reason and for peace," said the Marshal. "If it has proved possible to settle this difficult Czech problem by a meeting of four statesmen, it should be possible to settle any future problems that arise in the same way."

The Munich Conference meant the end of the League of Nations, the Marshal asserted in satisfied tones. He described it as characteristic of the mischievous influence of the League that, on the very day when the four Heads of Governments were making peace at Munich, Litvinoff had been making a warlike speech at Geneva.

Marshal Goering said that if the Czechs showed themselves reasonable, the future would now be clear.

"When you say 'reasonable,' do you mean obedient to German instructions?" I asked.

"Of course, if you are never going to believe Germany's word, you cannot expect to be on good terms with her," was the reply. "We have always avowed our double aim of annexing the Austrians and the Sudetens. Having now achieved both those aims, we wish to annex no one else—whether Czechs, Hungarians, Rumanians, or any other race.

"We shall naturally continue to extend our economic influence, but we shall extend it by commercial, not by political, means. We Germans are a great industrial nation. It is quite natural that we should acquire a position of influence over the smaller agricultural people that surround us."

Marshal Goering was rather scathing about the eleventh-hour scramble to put Britain on a war-basis. National defence was not a thing that could be improvised, he said.

The British Government had been wasting its time and money in providing gas-masks. Germany would not have used gas unless the British or French had started first. The Marshal did not believe that any civilized country would employ gas against civilian populations, although if Germany had been obliged to use it she had the most modern gases in readiness.

He did not think much of our anti-aircraft defences, especially the balloon barrage, the main purpose of which he thought was to reassure the public. The balloons blew away so easily in a gale that they had even picked up some of them in Germany.

"Do you know how many anti-aircraft guns you have?" the Marshal asked. "You have 458, which date from the last war. The only modern ones are some which began to be delivered last January and were immediately sent to Singapore from where they have been hurriedly sent home again. How many heavy anti-aircraft guns do you think Germany has at this moment? Four thousand!

"As for aircraft, I have seventeen factories making one type of machine alone, and working three shifts a day. When we determined to make Germany safe against all attack, there were no half-measures about it. We have done the thing on a gigantic scale.

"It is hopeless for England to try to catch up with us in aircraft construction, for I have been developing the German Air Force since 1933, while you only awoke from

your post-war sleep in 1935, when the Abyssinian crisis came, and the first money was not voted for rearmament until 1937. Even in Germany the manufacture of a new type of machine is a lengthy process. After its design has been approved, several months are required to build the first specimen. This has to be tested and improved, which may take another three months. Then a 'Zero series' of the new aeroplane has to be built for trying it out under service conditions.

"When all the reports of its performance have been studied, the Chief of the Air Staff is confronted by the big decision of deciding that it is the kind of machine that is required, upon which he gives the order for mass-production to begin. Several more months must elapse before the first deliveries start, and that is only possible if proper arrangements have been made well in advance for the provision of materials, gauges, labour and other necessities.

"The British system is much slower, for when I hear that Lord Nuffield has received a contract to build a thousand Hurricane Spitfires, the next thing I read in *The Times* is that he 'thinks he has found a site for the factory,' and then, many weeks later, that the foundations of the factory are being laid."

The mere voting of money, argued Marshal Goering, was not a guarantee of national security. He seemed, indeed, to share the view about British armaments which was well expressed by Mr. J. L. Garvin in the words: "We pay a colossal premium without proportionate insurance."

At about 2.30 on the morning of September 30, one of the Fuhrer's staff casually mentioned to me that Mr. Chamberlain was going to see Herr Hitler again before he left Munich for London at noon. It was for the purpose, I was told, of laying the basis for future contacts. This was surprising news, and obviously full of great

potentialities, but it was impossible to discover what was likely to ensue from this unexpected last-hour meeting. The initiative for it had been taken, I learned, entirely by Mr. Chamberlain, and no one on the German side then expected the dramatic result which actually occurred.

The Prime Minister had realized that it could have only unfortunate results if this meeting at Munich, arranged with so much difficulty, were restricted in its scope to settling the timetable of the German occupation of the Sudetenland. Munich must be remembered for something more than a surrender which, though justified by the fact that no British interest would have been served by taking the only other course open, which was the costly and disastrous one of war, must nevertheless diminish British and French prestige in the eyes of the rest of the world. If something could simultaneously be achieved to create the hope that similar crises in the future would be avoided, it would act as a set-off to the reproach that the Democratic Governments had capitulated before the threat of force.

Rising on the morning of September 30 after only five hours' sleep, Mr. Chamberlain accordingly set himself to draft a formula general enough for Hitler to find no reason for rejecting it, yet precise enough to be a formal pledge that consultation should be substituted for conflict in future Anglo-German relations.

It would be difficult for him to refuse to put his name to a statement embodying the views which the four Heads of Governments had expressed between themselves at the Fuhrerhaus the night before as to the need of continuing their contacts for the purpose of settling subsequent international difficulties.

The formula which Mr. Chamberlain produced was brief, positive and yet so general as to be no more than a statement of already recognized principle.

The three paragraphs it contained were typed out on a sheet of Foreign Office paper, bearing the Royal Arms

embossed at its head, and the Prime Minister put it into his pocket as he set out for his farewell call on the Führer.

The document read:

"We, the German Führer and Chancellor and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting to-day, and are agreed in recognizing that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe.

"We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

"We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference, and thus contribute to assure the peace of Europe."

It was no doubt a surprise to Herr Hitler when Mr. Chamberlain produced this manifesto, with the suggestion that they should both sign it as a record of the new understanding which their three meetings had brought into existence between them. He had expected Mr. Chamberlain to confine himself to the formal remarks customary between statesmen on leave-taking. The presentation for his immediate acceptance of a diplomatic instrument dealing with the whole future policy of Germany must have been a startling development.

On the other hand, he could hardly afford even to appear to hesitate in giving the pledge that the Prime Minister had thus suddenly requested. The whole basis of the negotiations, from Berchtesgaden to Munich, had been that the German attitude in the Sudeten question was justified because this matter was a direct concern of hers and none of either France or Britain. These Powers, the Führer had always argued, were not entitled to interfere in the family affairs of the German people, nor would he admit the contention that the increase in German

strength due to the incorporation of the Sudetens in the Reich would be dangerous to them.

Herr Hitler could not know to what extent the French Premier had been concerned in drafting these words, which were clearly designed to give lasting and public expression to the pacific assurances with which he had supported his case. If he refused to approve them, the British and French Premiers might conceivably repudiate the Munich Settlement as having been negotiated under false pretences on the German side. But for twelve hours past Germany had been assured that the danger of war was over. The reaction of relief had set in. It is difficult to rekindle a flame that has been damped down. Even the boldest horse, once checked in his take-off for a formidable jump, may refuse if presented at the obstacle a second time. Thus, although perhaps with reluctance, Herr Hitler signed the draft, to whose origin the Royal Arms at its head bore testimony.

So the swiftest of all pacts came into existence—a peace pledge that was the by-product of an agreement which had averted conflict only by turning the other cheek.

It cannot be claimed that the Munich Pact was adequate compensation for the loss of prestige entailed by what to onlookers, beyond the Atlantic and elsewhere, seemed to be a French and British retreat in face of German threats. But the conditions which made this retreat necessary had begun to accumulate long before the Czech crisis arose. Mr. Chamberlain, in his capacity as Prime Minister facing the issue of peace or war at Munich, was in no way to blame for avoiding at all costs a conflict upon which he knew that his country would enter dangerously unprepared. A heavier responsibility lies upon him by reason of the fact that he was Chancellor of the Exchequer throughout that period of Government inertia with regard to national defence which the Minister in charge of that

Department once mournfully described as "the years that the locusts have eaten."

Whoever may have been to blame for Britain's weakness in the crisis of September, 1938, that weakness was an existing fact which those responsible for British policy were forced to take into account.

Subsequent revelations have proved that the shortcomings of British equipment for defence were much greater than most people suspected. Articles by well-known experts on military matters record defects which would inevitably have made the early stages of a war disastrous for Britain. Captain Liddell Hart, writing in the *Contemporary Review* of January, 1939, asserted that many of the guns and other equipment issued from the Ordnance depots were unusable.

"Even after six days of mobilization, it was plain that a large proportion of the guns, perhaps even half of them, were not capable of engaging an attacker."

He further found it "hard to say whether the state of the Air Force was worse than that of the anti-aircraft forces or *vice versa*. Mobilization revealed far too many defects, and though we had a bombing force of some sixty squadrons, we were relatively weaker than when rearmament began. None of them appear to have been operatively complete. Many of the machines which were available had no turrets and part of those that had were without guns. The result was that, although we had nominally a bombing force of about 700 machines, only a fraction of them were capable of being used."

It was Captain Liddell Hart's conclusion that "this condition of deficiency and inefficiency forms the chief justification for the British Government's part in inducing the Czechs to accept Germany's uncompromising demands."

The degree of French preparedness for war was less well known in this country, where many people still believed

that the formidable qualities of the French Army would, in the event of war, have turned the scale in favour of the Western Powers. It is, therefore, instructive to read the frank avowal as to the military resources of France contained in an article by General Daffour, which was published in the Paris newspaper *Époque* on October 8, 1938, only a week after the crisis was over:

"Who does not know to-day," wrote this former General Staff Officer, "that, whereas the Reich produces 380 modern aeroplanes per month with a speed capacity of 250 m.p.h., we, in France, are only producing 30, most of which are out-of-date types? (During the month of August the production was only 10 by reason of the holidays!)"

"Who does not know that, as regards modern types of machine, our total production to date consists of 7 Morane 405's and 9 or 10 Potez 63's, while Hitler disposes of a fleet of 3,000 machines of which at least 2,000 are of a quality at least equal if not superior to that of these 17 aeroplanes?"

"The strategic position of France resulting from the existence of the Rome-Berlin Axis, and the support that she has given to Red Spain, is that she is shut up in a box with five frontiers to defend or guard—those separating her from Germany and Italy; the frontier of South Tunis; the frontier of Northern Morocco and the frontier of the Pyrenees.

"Our active Army consists of 560,000 non-commissioned officers and men, of whom 412,000 are stationed in France. It is confronted by:

1. The active German Army, which in normal times is 900,000 strong and which can be swiftly doubled, as we have witnessed in the Sudeten crisis; and
2. The active Italian Army, which each summer reaches a strength of 660,000 men, of which 85,000 are stationed in Lybia.

$$900,000 + 660,000 = 1,560,000."$$

As regards comparative air-strength, statistics compiled by the United States War Department experts for President Roosevelt in December estimated that, at the time of the

crisis, Germany and Italy together had six times as many first-line aircraft as Britain and France could muster. They stated that in the month of November, 1938, Germany's aeroplane output was 1,000 machines—the figure that had been given to me in Germany at the time of the crisis. And, although Britain and France have lately come to look upon the United States as a source of supply from which to make up their own deficiencies in aerial strength, the limitations of this aid are indicated by the fact that six of Germany's largest aeroplane factories each employ more men than are engaged in the entire American aircraft-industry. The figures supplied to the American Government showed that Germany was then employing about 400,000 skilled workers in her aircraft industry, as compared with 36,000 in the United States and 100,000 in Great Britain.

Under these circumstances, to have gone to war with Germany because she insisted upon immediate occupation of the Sudetenland would have been nothing but a fight for prestige undertaken under conditions of the gravest disadvantage for Britain and France. By refusing to engage in such a desperate gamble, Mr. Chamberlain gave proof both of common sense and courage.

After the enthusiasm which greeted the Premier's return and produced celebrations in Downing Street and before Buckingham Palace that would have accorded with the winning of a great victory, a swift reaction set in among a certain section of the public which culminated in the resignation of a member of the Cabinet, Mr. Duff Cooper, the First Lord of the Admiralty.

Now that the immediate danger of war was over, censure of the Government, animated by all the anti-Fascist feeling in the country, and drawing also on the misplaced confidence in the League of Nations which had been built up on many years of propaganda by and for that body, began to crystallize in assertions that the Munich

Settlement had been a "betrayal of democracy"; that Chamberlain and Daladier had allowed themselves to be bluffed by the Dictators; that the delight which the people of Germany and Italy, as well as those of Britain and France, had shown at the disappearance of the war danger was proof that Hitler and Mussolini could not have forced their countries to fight if Britain and France had taken up arms in defence of Czecho-Slovakia against the German claims.

To anyone, however, who knew the enormous preparations going on in Germany for the assertion of her national aims, the only well-founded criticism of the Prime Minister was that he did not go still further in those early days of October, 1938, and set up in the internal administration of the country a similar concentration of Governmental authority to that which enables the rulers of Germany and Italy to secure such rapid and far-reaching results.

As I listened from the gallery of the House of Commons on October 3 to Mr. Duff Cooper taking three-quarters of an hour—at a moment when the whole country was eagerly awaiting the Premier's speech—to explain the reasons that had led him to resign from the Government, I sincerely hoped that when Mr. Chamberlain at last rose, he would vigorously and emphatically confront the nation with a picture of its own unpreparedness.

I should have liked to hear him tell the House of Commons that if the British Government had seemed to acquiesce tamely in the German determination to settle the Sudeten problem on its own terms and within a brief time-limit fixed by itself, the reason was that the pacifist opposition so largely represented in the House had reduced Britain to a degree of weakness in which it would have been criminal folly to run the risk of becoming involved in a European war.

He might well have denounced the British pacifist as

a traitor to the very cause that he professes, for by opposing the adequate development of his country's strength in proportion to that of other nations he reduces the influence in foreign affairs of a Government whose power will always be used for the maintenance of world-peace. And I should have liked to hear him end that speech by announcing that he had asked the King to prorogue Parliament for six months, during which time the administration would be carried on by Orders in Council, so that the Government might give its undivided attention to remedying the deficiencies in national defence which the crisis had revealed.

The petty interruptions from the Labour benches during the Prime Minister's speech, against which he paused to protest, was a pitiful demonstration of the strain that Parliamentary duties impose upon the Ministers of a democratic Government, who have, in addition, to discharge all those responsibilities to which the rulers of authoritarian States can devote themselves without any such encumbrance.

Meanwhile the international conference which was to fix the future frontiers of Czecho-Slovakia was meeting in Berlin. It consisted of the British, French and Italian Ambassadors, with representatives of the German and Czech Governments.

The original intention had been that plebiscites should be held in the areas where Czechs and Germans were numerically about equal, but the Czech Government unexpectedly showed readiness to meet the German claims, and the British and French Ambassadors took the view that it would be well to get the new frontier fixed as soon as possible without the delay, and possible disturbance, which a plebiscite would involve. It was thus that Germany came to add to the Reich a territory of close on 12,000 square miles, as large as Saxony and Thuringia combined, and containing a population of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions, of whom

some 700,000 were Czechs living in districts where the Germans formed a majority.

Since the nations to which they had looked for help had failed them, Czech public opinion swung over to a morbid resolution to get on good terms with Germany. The strength of this feeling was evidenced by the fact that when Dr. Benes resigned the Presidency and left the country in the early days of October, he went without any public expression of regret. As the representative of the policy of alliance with France, and of confidence in the protection of the League of Nations, he disappeared unregretted from the country whose political fortunes he had dominated for twenty years.

The new position of the Czech State was defined by its Foreign Minister, M. Chvalkowski who, at the end of February, 1939, addressing members of the National Union Party, which had been formed on the German model, said;

“Our foreign policy must be to improve our relations with our neighbours, especially Germany. The delay in settling our minorities problem cost us a third of our territory and national wealth. We cannot continue to quarrel with our minorities. We are determined to follow a policy of absolute correctness, benevolence and tact towards our German minority. If they want to follow an ideology which dominates almost the whole German race, then we cannot prevent them from doing so, especially as Germany is our strongest neighbour. To admit this is not weakness, but the law of self-preservation.

“We must be ready to come to reasonable compromises with Germany. We cannot tempt fate. Propaganda which aims at raising hopes in our nation for a possible return to the old conditions must be suppressed.”

The piece of paper, bearing the signature of Herr Hitler and Mr. Chamberlain, which the Prime Minister

waved to the cheering crowd that met him on his return from Munich, was a fragile product of the Sudeten crisis which for a brief time prevented the agreement signed at Munich from appearing to the world as a new signpost along the road to war.

On a matter of this kind it is sometimes difficult to recall one's exact appreciation of the position at the time. As a record of my own view, I will therefore quote from an article which I wrote, a week after the Munich Conference, at the request of one of the official Press agencies in Germany, and which appeared in a large number of German newspapers:

From my observations of the feeling in the House of Commons during the debate on Mr. Chamberlain's action in the crisis, and from such contacts as a British journalist possesses with popular feeling, I hold the conviction that the effectiveness of speeches, declarations and pledges exchanged between Germany and Britain has now been exhausted. It is not words but deeds that are henceforth necessary, if these two kindred nations are in future to live side by side in peace and mutual confidence.

It has been agreed between the Führer and the Prime Minister that whenever questions concerning Anglo-German relations arise in the future, they will again resort to the method of personal contact for settling them. British public opinion, at least, earnestly hopes that this reciprocal resolution will very shortly produce positive and constructive results.

If the British and German peoples, as indicated in the Munich Agreement, have renounced war between themselves, certain armaments now in existence become superfluous. It would benefit both countries to reduce, as far as their national safety allows, the immense expenditure of material and human effort at present devoted to the manufacture of non-productive instruments of war.

But such measures need to be taken quickly. The close approach which Europe has just made to a general war will have the effect of greatly augmenting armaments unless some agreement for their limitation can be reached. The process of preparing for war acquires a constantly increasing

momentum. It imposes such a strain upon the resources of every nation that the temptation to use the costly equipment thus created becomes almost irresistible. More plainly than ever before, the countries of Western Europe stand at a parting of the ways. The one leads to mutual understanding and the reduction of the gigantic forces under whose shadow we now live; the other leads inevitably to a conflict more universally ruinous than the one which ended 24 years ago.

If ever there was a time for making the maximum effort to direct the nations along the right one of these alternate roads, that time is now.

Before the end of November, 1938, a new factor had already blighted the hopes of better Anglo-German understanding. It was the renewal of the mass-offensive against the Jews in Germany, launched under official orders and organization, after the murder in Paris of an attaché of the German Embassy, Herr vom Rath, by a young Jew born in Germany of Polish parents.

This was followed by anti-Semitic riots in German cities, by the dynamiting of synagogues, the arrests of many Jews, the imposition of a fine of £83,000,000 upon the whole Jewish population of Germany, and the recall of the German Ambassador to the United States as a result of protests against these measures there.

It is one of the afflictions of Europe that, at a time when national resentments, jealousies and ambitions are piled so high as to make the preservation of peace a constant miracle, this racial problem should enter into the situation as an additional irritant.

Upon the question of relations with the Jews it is impossible to argue with Germans. They regard the Jewish race as an evil growth to be extirpated as far as possible from German territory. They maintain that it is impossible for the British people to understand the reasons for this point of view, since Britain has never experienced the disastrous and demoralizing effects upon her national life with which they charge the Jews of Germany.

Under the German Republic, Jewish corruption and exploitation existed to a grave degree. The ordinary German admits that large numbers of the Jews in his country had no share in these abuses, but he accepts the Nazi Government's point of view that there can be no half-measures or distinctions in dealing with the Jewish problem. Many even of those who, in the past, had done good service to the Nazi cause have suffered as a result of the discovery that they are partly of Jewish blood.

More than any other influence, this ruthless attitude has hindered the growth of better relations between Britain and Germany. By offending against the principles of humanity, it has alienated some of the leading British workers for Anglo-German understanding.

Another development of the winter of 1938 was Germany's announcement of her intention to build submarines up to the total tonnage of the British Navy in that type of craft. Germany was entitled to take this step under the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, which she signed in 1934.

The intention to increase her submarine tonnage was declared openly and in the proper form. It was natural, however, that speculation should be aroused as to its significance. It may be intended to create a naval "Siegfried Line" for Germany's maritime protection in the West while carrying on a possible future war with Russia. In such a war, Germany's fleet, now limited to 35 per cent. of the total British naval tonnage, would be strong enough to dominate the Baltic and to escort a German expeditionary force which might be dispatched to land near Leningrad. Germany's new submarines could prevent any other fleet from entering the Baltic while such an operation was in progress.

Another theory which has naturally occurred to British observers is that this strong submarine flotilla may con-

ceivably be intended to act in the Western Mediterranean and the Eastern Atlantic from bases on the territory of Nationalist Spain. Alternatively, it could be used to defend German shores while the surface-ships of the German Navy, of small account as an independent force, were dispatched to the Mediterranean to strengthen the Italian Fleet.

The third major circumstance which has affected the European atmosphere since the Czecho-Slovak crisis is the strong attitude in support of the democratic Powers taken up by the President and Government of the United States. This is not entirely altruistic in its character. The American police had discovered an extensive network of German espionage in the United States. Hardly was the trial of the Nazi agents over than the Jewish persecution launched by the German Government roused a wave of indignation in America. It led to the mutual recall of Ambassadors by Berlin and Washington.

In December, 1938, reports of Nazi and Fascist infiltrations into South America and the prospects of the reaction of General Franco's victory upon the Spanish States in that Continent led the United States Government to propose common measures of defence at the Pan-American Conference at Lima.

The greatest development of all, however, is the re-armament of Britain followed by her new policy of Continental guarantees and alliances. Yet this is far from being proportionate to the dangers against which it is directed.

Until the belated introduction of limited national service at the end of April, British energies had not been brought under any control, nor stimulated by any force but individual patriotism. Professional sport, racing and amusements of all kinds still take up the leisure of the great majority of our people. We are like a family

that will not interrupt its game of bridge while the house is burning, but are satisfied to let whichever player happens to be dummy make a casual effort to put out the fire.

The greatest financial resources in the world are an inadequate substitute for the system of personal service and discipline which Germany has brought into being.

Unless Britain breaks away from the easy-going traditions of her past, she will be in deadly peril.

CHAPTER XVII

SEQUEL TO MUNICH

GERMANY's success at Munich in asserting her claims against Czecho-Slovakia had an instant effect throughout South Eastern Europe. To the small States of that area it served as an impressive example of the consequences that opposition to German pressure might entail.

Here was Czecho-Slovakia, which had tried to exert the influence of a Great Power in Central Europe, suddenly reduced to virtual dependence upon Germany. Despite her alliances with France and Russia, her French-trained army and her costly frontier fortifications, she had collapsed beneath the threat of German aggression as soon as it had been brought to bear upon her. Her position as founder of the Little Entente, and the influence she had always exerted in League of Nations affairs through the international activities of her President, Dr. Benes, had crumbled away before the mere shadow of Germany's heavy hand.

Henceforth she would exist only by the tolerance of her powerful neighbour. Her capital was now but 25 miles from the German frontier, and though her territorial integrity had been guaranteed by formal promises—actual in the case of Britain and France, conditional from Germany and Italy—no one, even in what was left of Czecho-Slovakia, really believed that the nations who had declined to fight for her in the great crisis of 1938 would go to war on her behalf at any later stage.

Few people in foreign countries realized at the time how complete a transformation of the internal conditions of the artificially-compounded Republic would be involved by the settlement of Munich. The industrial and mineral wealth of the country had been very largely concentrated in the area occupied by the German minority. Its transfer to Germany changed Czecho-Slovakia from an industrial to an agricultural State.

Following upon the Munich Agreement, the subsequent delimitation of frontiers carried out by the Conference of Ambassadors in Berlin and, as regards the new Hungarian border, by the arbitration of the German and Italian Foreign Ministers, took away from Czecho-Slovakia:—

66	per cent.	of her coal-mines
80	„ „ „ „	lignite deposits
70	„ „ „ „	iron and steel manufactures
90	„ „ „ „	textile and porcelain industries
80	„ „ „ „	cement industry
70	„ „ „ „	electric power-production.

The territories which she forfeited were the main source of her export trade. Her agricultural products were all that remained for her to sell abroad, and for them the only available market was Germany.

As a result of the warning experience of Czecho-Slovakia, the other small Central European States began to revise their national policies in such a way as to avoid the likelihood of conflict with the will of the German colossus.

Hungary, which had been the first country to benefit from Germany's enlargement at the expense of Czecho-Slovakia, since it had enabled her to recover most of the 750,000 Hungarians embodied in the Czech Republic by the Treaty of Trianon, was also the first to feel the weight

of the new power which Germany had acquired beyond her borders in Central Europe.

Before the Great War Hungarians and Poles were in direct contact, as Slovakia for a thousand years had been a province of Hungary, and its frontiers marched with those of Russian Poland. It was the ambition of the Budapest Government to restore this contact by annexation of the intervening sixty-mile-wide Slovak province of Ruthenia.

Its 500,000 inhabitants were in favour of this plan. They had suffered economically by the detachment of their country from Hungary, for it is a mountainous land whose narrow gorges run North and South, opening into the Hungarian plain, while to the West communications are so few and difficult that trade between Ruthenia and Slovakia was almost impossible.

When all these countries were combined under the old Habsburg Monarchy, Ruthenians had been accustomed to sell to Hungary the timber which, except for the biggest stags in Europe, is the only product of their mountains. At harvest-time the peasants used to come down and find work in the Hungarian wheat-fields. All this had been made impossible by the separation of the two countries under the Treaty of Trianon.

As for the Hungarians, it was not political reasons alone that inspired their wish to extend their borders to those of Poland. The Ruthenians, in their poverty, had taken to felling their forests on a large scale, since lumber-work was now their only source of livelihood. They were too poor to carry out reafforestation, with the result that the mountains were being rapidly denuded. This state of affairs threatened to expose the Hungarian plain to serious flooding, through the overflow of the river Theiss, which flows out of the mountains of Ruthenia.

Immediately after the Munich Conference the Hungarian Army, consisting of eighteen divisions with artillery and aeroplanes to correspond, prepared to march into

Ruthenia, in response to an invitation from the local Government of that province.

Had the Polish Government been prepared to co-operate, the Hungarian advance might have taken place at once. Poland, however, had already attained her own national objective by recovering from Czecho-Slovakia the 70,000 Poles living in the frontier province of Teschen. She was willing to give only moral support to the project of a common frontier with Hungary.

The German Government at first stated that it was indifferent to the fate of Ruthenia, but during October it warned Hungary against the proposed occupation. As this was allowed in the following March, the veto was doubtless a penalty for Hungarian lack of faith in the German cause.

I went to Kassa, a frontier town of the territory which Hungary recovered in October, 1938, to see the solemn entry of the Regent of Hungary, Admiral Horthy, riding on a dapple-grey horse with girls in white Hungarian costume strewing flowers in his path. As one looked round the splendid mediæval cathedral in Kassa while the *Te Deum* was being sung, it seemed hardly credible that the drafters of the Treaty of Trianon should have handed over to foreign rule a city whose Hungarian history is so plainly and permanently recorded in its buildings. Wherever the eye fell, the Crown of St. Stephen, with its crooked cross, was to be seen reproduced in the old stained-glass windows or in the gilded carving of the choir-stalls.

Young girls—a surprisingly large number of them really beautiful—lined the whole length of the nave, wearing the elaborate national costume that had been preserved in their families during all the twenty years of exile. As the Bishop of Kassa, in his gold cope, gave thanks for the restoration of the town to its native land, I saw in the candle-light tears glistening on the brown and wrinkled faces of old Hungarian generals sitting near me. When the National Anthem surged up into the dim and lofty roof of the Cathedral, women sobbed for joy,

and the faces beneath their embroidered tiaras were transfigured.

The thanksgiving service was followed by a military review in the main street of Kassa. Though their equipment was not up to the most modern standards, the men were of the sturdy peasant type of which good soldiers can be made. The troops were part of a concentration that had been prepared for the occupation of Ruthenia.

After Germany's embargo on this project, it was officially abandoned, but groups of both Hungarian and Polish volunteers crept stealthily across the border and for some time carried on a guerrilla warfare with the Czech gendarmerie. They did no harm to the Ruthenians themselves, and were, indeed, on friendly terms with them.

Before the end of 1938, another reason had been suggested for Germany's refusal to allow Hungary and Poland to divide up Ruthenia. This mountainous and poverty-stricken tongue of land had value in German eyes not so much as a corridor towards Rumania as for its possibilities of being used as a wedge to open the gates of Russia. The 500,000 Ruthenians are of White Russian race closely akin to the Ukrainians, and Germany revealed her purpose by insisting that the Czecho-Slovak Government should transform the name of its most easterly province into "Sub-Carpathian Ukraine."

The German plan appeared at the time to be the organization of an autonomy movement among this outlying fraction of the Ukrainian race, in the hope that it might extend by contagion to the 30,000,000 Ukrainians who make up 80 per cent. of the population of the 175,000 square mile Russian province of that name.

Once detached from Russia as an independent republic under German protection, that region would become the granary of the Reich, as it was during its occupation by Germany throughout the last summer of the Great War.

It is not only to Moscow that the idea of Ukrainian autonomy is disturbing, but to Warsaw also, since Polish Galicia contains 5,000,000 inhabitants of that race, whose dissatisfaction with their present condition has often been expressed.

After Germany had annexed Bohemia and Moravia in March, 1939, and brought Slovakia under her military protection, the Hungarians were at last allowed to fulfil their long-cherished desire to reoccupy the thus isolated province of Ruthenia. This does not necessarily imply any abandonment of the German plan for resurrecting that semi-independent Republic of the Ukraine which she formed in 1918, after Soviet Russia had signed the Peace of Brest-Litovsk. Hungary's possession of Ruthenia is regarded in Germany as an interim stage in a greater development still to be completed.

With its usual energy the German Government lost no time in exploiting the success it had achieved at Munich in other fields outside Czecho-Slovakia. Dr. Walther Funk, the German Minister of Economics, was sent off on a tour of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Turkey, with the aim of forming what he himself described as a "Balkan axis," extending from the German frontier to the Black Sea. He laid before the Governments of these three countries plans for economic reconstruction on a grand scale. They consisted of proposals for acquiring their mineral and agricultural products on the usual German basis of "payment in goods." In Ankara, Dr. Funk offered the Turkish Government a credit of 150 million marks, or about £12,000,000, to be taken out by Turkey in the form of industrial equipment and armaments and paid off by shipments of raw materials.

Arriving in Ankara a week or so after Dr. Funk, I found no signs that his visit had had extensive practical results. The Government had accepted his offer of financial credit, on the principle that it is superfluous to

look a gift-horse in the mouth. Germany already took 65 per cent. of Turkey's exports, but it was clearly the desire of Turkey to establish closer relations, not only economic but political, with Britain. To her, as a naval Power, with large interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Turks looked as being most likely to give them support if the German expansion in Eastern Europe, which all these smaller States were uneasily expecting, should one day threaten their interests.

The difficulty in the way of increased Turkish purchases from England was that the Turks could not get sterling, whereas they have large quantities of blocked marks at their disposition in Germany. They had, however, ordered four destroyers, four submarines, some coast-defence vessels and a series of de Havilland aeroplanes in England out of the credit of £12,500,000 conceded by the British Government in the spring of 1938. The rest of it was being used to develop mines and industries and the harbours and steamship lines of the Black Sea.

For purposes of trading with Britain, Turkey is handicapped by the fact that the taste for Turkish tobacco in this country has almost disappeared. Until the war it might be said that the upper classes in Britain smoked Turkish tobacco, and the lower classes the cheaper American product. When Turkey joined the ranks of our enemies, the supply of tobacco bearing her name was cut off, for though most of it came from Macedonia, the tobacco-growing area there was soon in the Balkan war-zone. Smokers of Turkish tobacco in England were consequently obliged to fall back upon the Virginia brand, and, having grown accustomed to it, continued its use after the war. The big English cigarette manufacturing firms have spent vast sums on advertising their products, and to revive the market for Turkish tobacco in Great Britain would be a costly undertaking.

During the funeral ceremonies of Kemal Atatürk, which were the reason of my visit to Ankara, I had several talks with Turkish Ministers and with the new President, İsmet İnönü, whom I had known as General İsmet Paşa at the Lausanne Conference in 1922, and with whom I had paid my first visit to Angora (as it was then called) during an interlude of that Conference in the spring of the following year.

They were uneasy about German and Italian ambitions in Eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. The Turkish Government was determined to defend the Dardanelles as a channel forbidden to any fleet desiring to invade the Black Sea for aggressive purposes, and had begun to refortify the straits.

I was told that Turkey had renounced any ambition to extend her dominions into Syria or elsewhere. The Foreign Minister assured me that she would not take back her former Arab territories as a gift. They had weakened her by dispersing her strength and including non-loyal elements within the Turkish Empire.

Dr. Tewfik Rusdi Aras, who had been Foreign Minister for thirteen years and resigned that post to become Ambassador in London when İsmet İnönü succeeded to the Presidency, declared that, whatever happened in Europe, Turkey would never be found on the side of Britain's enemies. He said that the idea of friendship with Britain had penetrated the minds of the mass of the nation and that no people was more tenacious of an idea when once it was established. The same, he maintained, held good of Turkey's friendship with her old enemy, Greece.

Dr. Rusdi Aras became, during the journeys he made while in office, a well-known international character. He has the reassuring "bedside manner" of his original medical profession. I found him still living in the official residence of the Foreign Minister, a modern house designed on horizontal lines, gleaming with glass and chromium

steel, and built on the top of the hill of Chankaya, where are the President's Palace and the Embassies. A splendid view stretches far over the bare brown plain below, out of which the fortress-crowned rocky height of the old city rises above the exhibition-like buildings of new Ankara, where mediæval squalor and ultra-modernity exist side by side.

Dr. Rusdi Aras pointed out that, while Europe was growing increasingly divided, the Balkans and the Middle East, once a region of perennial disorder, had become highly organized for peace. He described Turkey as the keystone of a peace-structure extending from the Balkans to the frontiers of India, and containing a hundred million people. This figure was made up of the Balkan League, consisting of Rumania, Jugoslavia, Greece and herself, together with the signatories of the non-aggression Pact of Saadabad—Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey.

The reception given to Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood and to the Royal Marines from the *Queen Elizabeth*, who represented the King and the British Government at the funeral of the dead President, Kemal Ataturk, was a cordial one. After a generation largely spent in the unprofitable pursuit of other international friendships, Turkey has come back to her traditional policy of co-operation with Britain.

It was a curious experience to watch the coffin of Kemal Ataturk carried to the unusual resting-place of the Ankara Ethnographic Museum, surrounded by international honours, and saluted by his old British antagonist of the Dardanelles. His career had been one of savage violence and moody self-indulgence, yet his people mourned him by hysterical weeping beside his coffin even ten days after his death. Both in that tawdry gilt palace of Dolma Baghtche, on the shore of the Bosphorus, where he lay in state, and in the chilly rain-swept streets of Ankara as the population for a whole day marched past the high

bier in front of the Parliament House on which he lay awaiting burial, one constantly saw members of the public who had collapsed in paroxysms of grief being carried away in ambulances.

In Rumania, as in Hungary, I found at the end of 1938 a very keen perception of the increase of the German menace to all the Danubian States since she had succeeded in setting her foot upon the doorstep of Czechoslovakia.

Rumanians felt that economic compulsion would force them into the German orbit. They had sent a memorandum to the British Government pointing out that Germany was constantly despatching experts to spy out the land, and that they could only hope to collaborate with Britain and France if those countries bought their products, and so changed Rumania's unfavourable commercial balance into a margin of credit.

From the Finance Minister and the National Bank in Bucharest I received details of a scheme for increasing Anglo-Rumanian trade, which required the creation of a credit of £12,000,000, or else a substantial increase in British purchases of corn from that country. In 1938, up to the month of November, such purchases had amounted to only $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the importation of corn into Britain, as against 57 per cent. from Canada and 23 per cent. from Australia.

King Carol, who received me in audience at the Palace, had just returned from a visit to England, where he had made an attempt, only partially successful, to persuade the British Government to organize the purchase of a larger proportion of Rumania's annual wheat surplus of 800,000 tons. All that he had been promised was that a commission of British experts would come to Bucharest to study the question.

On his way back from London, the King of Rumania had stopped at Berchtesgaden to spend an afternoon with

Herr Hitler. From this contact he had at that time derived the opinion that the extension of German influence in Eastern Europe need not necessarily take a political form, or be carried out by military pressure, but he said that no one could deny its great economic force.

I was impressed by the energetic and self-confident bearing of a King whom many people in England used to regard as irresponsible in character. The gravity of the times and the weight of his Royal duties have certainly matured him. His personality is the mainspring of present-day Rumania. He has made himself the operative Head of the Rumanian Government. He is developing a new function of kingship. Monarchs used to be patriarchs; King Carol has become a Royal Managing Director.

He sat in a room of the palace which might have passed for the office of a business-man. A large desk was its most conspicuous piece of furniture. Its front edge was hollowed out so that its occupant could get among his papers. The walls were panelled in light wood, and the Royal residence as a whole had an atmosphere of up-to-date efficiency.

The same simplicity characterizes the upbringing of the King's son, the Grand Voivode of Alba Julia, better known as Prince Michael of Rumania. His father arranged for me to go and see him at his lessons in a little house in the garden of the palace. For a boy of 17 the Prince is most powerfully built. His A.D.C. told me that he weighed 13 stone 5 lb., and one could see that this was made up not of flesh but of solid bone and brawn. He stands 6 feet high, and has a chest-measurement which must be at least 45 inches.

I found him drinking milk and eating biscuits with the two boys who share his studies. The number was originally ten, but the other eight have recently been transferred to other classes in the St. Sava School, to which the Prince's private form of three is attached. His companions have

shared his education for the past six years. Both are sixteen. One of them, Mircea Ianitsu, the son of the proprietor of a chain of bookshops in Bucharest, is of Rumanian race. The other is a fair-haired boy, Walter Heltmann, belonging to that minority of Saxon Germans which has lived in Transylvania since the twelfth century. His father is a schoolmaster.

Prince Michael speaks English well, in a low, musical, rather drawling voice. Engineering is his passion, and he sometimes works as a mechanic in overalls at a bench in the Rumanian Ford factory. He has driven a motor-car from childhood and has a motor-yacht, presented to him by the City of Bucharest, as well as a speed-boat that does 30 m.p.h. Yet he would seem to have little time for hobbies since he does school-lessons from 8 a.m. till 1 p.m. six days out of the seven, and in the afternoon learns music, riding or fencing, besides having three hours' military drill in the course of the week.

The school-house where he spends most of his time might have been at any English public school. There were the same bare rooms with a ping-pong table in one of them, a carpentry set in another, and tattered books in bookshelves against the wall. Nothing suggested the surroundings of a Court except the liveries of the two footmen bringing in His Royal Highness's milk and biscuits.

It is by moving about the countries of South-Eastern Europe that one learns to appreciate how greatly Germany's power and influence have been increased by her annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, followed by that of Bohemia and Moravia, with the reduction of Slovakia to a protectorate.

The Balkans watch Germany with the anxious attention that a farmer gives to the weather. It is from the statesmen of countries in that area, whose national welfare, or even existence, now depends upon the course of future

German policy, that one obtains the most reliable estimate of its future direction.

For two months after the Munich Agreement, I was travelling in that region and talking on this subject with men of different nationalities and views. I found among them a striking unanimity of view as to the probable developments of the next few years.

They see the position thus:

Germany is now a nation of 80,000,000 inhabitants, larger than any European country has ever been with the exception of Russia, which is too primitive to be brought into comparison.

In complete control of the German people is a man who unites the visionary idealism of a South German with the Prussian's fondness for forceful methods. He is a dreamer who finds in his hands all the power and efficiency required for the realization of his dreams. Frederick the Great and Bismarck, whose pictures hang in all the rooms where Hitler works, were his spiritual predecessors, and he intends to leave their achievements far behind.

According to his conception, the future history of Continental Europe will be the history of Germany. The *Pax Germanica* is to become what the *Pax Romana* was 2,000 years ago. To Nuremberg have been taken from Vienna the ancient crown and sceptre of the Holy Roman Empire. That city, which the Fuhrer is embellishing with gigantic political buildings, is destined, in his mind, to be the centre and perhaps the capital of a nation 100,000,000 strong, to which all other States, at any rate on the Eastern side of the Continent, will be tributaries or satellites.

The prospect of this development has produced powerful reactions. Britain and France have pledged themselves to defend the independence of Poland, Rumania and Greece and entered into an understanding with Turkey. The British and French Fleets already occupy their war-

stations in the Mediterranean. Military and aerial preparations have been intensified in both countries to a degree unprecedented in times of peace.

Disinterested sympathy with small nations is not the only motive inspiring these grave measures. They were rendered necessary by the fact that the extension of German political control across South-Eastern Europe would bring her to the door of the Near and Middle East, a region in which Britain and France have vital interests.

Though the French Mandate for Syria is being brought to an end, the large financial, commercial and cultural interests established by France in that country still remain. Britain's stakes in this part of the world are greater. She accepted, with unfortunate results, the responsibility for the administration of Palestine. From the coast of that country runs the British-owned pipe-line to the oil wells of Iraq, which was formerly under the tutelage of Britain, but is now an independent State protected by a British guarantee of its integrity.

South of Palestine lies the Suez Canal, the highway to Britain's Empire in the East, and beyond that Egypt, another State over whose affairs she recently renounced control, while still accepting the responsibility of guaranteeing its independence.

It is inevitable that Germany's avowed intentions of Eastward expansion should give rise to apprehensions that the two Dictator-Powers may move upon converging courses, with the ultimate aim of achieving domination over the Near and Middle East. The indications are that Germany's route would lie through Hungary and Rumania to the Black Sea. Italy, possessing a great military and aerial base in the colony of Libya, together with similarly equipped outposts in the islands of the Dodecanese off the coast of Asia Minor, could co-operate by action against Egypt and Turkey.

If such a plan existed and were carried to success, the

Dictators might one day meet in Constantinople to re-draw the map of the Near and Middle East in the same way as the map of Central Europe was re-drawn in Munich and subsequently modified at Prague.

So far as Britain and France are at present concerned, the only demand of the new German Imperialism directly affecting them is the one for the return of her former colonies or for satisfactory substitute-territories. The German Colonial Empire, which was suppressed at the end of the war, had an area of about 1,000,000 square miles and a population of over 12,000,000 inhabitants. The recovery of these territories has been an aim declared by the leaders of the National Socialist Government as openly as they avowed their intention of bringing Austria and the Sudeten Germans within the Reich.

Though European objectives have first call upon Germany's energies, there can be no doubt that the formal demand for the return of her colonies will some day be addressed to the British Empire, France and Belgium, which divided up between them the German territories in Africa. The Pacific islands distributed among Australia, New Zealand and Germany's present associate, Japan, do not appear to figure in her claims.

It may well be that Germany will not press the demand for the recovery of her African Empire until she has increased her strength by consolidating her position in Eastern Europe, and that she brings it forward meanwhile only for the purpose of distracting the attention of the Western Powers from that operation. Confirmation of this might be found in Herr Hitler's declaration at Augsburg on November 21, 1937, when he said:

"We must raise the demand for colonial living-room. What people do not care to hear to-day they will be unable to ignore in a few years' time, *and, in four or five years they will have to take it into proper account.*"

The Allies during the war had repudiated the intention of making territorial acquisitions at the expense of Germany. They got round this repudiation at the Peace Conference with the aid of that doctrinaire, President Wilson, who invented the system of "mandates," by which Germany's colonies should not be annexed but held "on trust," under the supervision of the League of Nations. It was, perhaps, well that this system was devised, for a trust can be surrendered when its purpose has ceased.

The difficulties in the way of such a transfer are too well-known to need enumeration. German South-West Africa is mandated to the Government of the Union of South Africa, who are strongly opposed to the restoration of foreign sovereignty over a territory on their own borders. Some of the Dutch Nationalists of South Africa even declare that, should such a step be carried through, it would be to South Africa's advantage to transfer her allegiance to Germany rather than have potentially hostile territory so close to them.

South-West Africa contains 20,000 South Africans and 10,000 Germans, of whom 6,000 have taken South African nationality. From the beginning of the Nazi regime, the province has been subjected to steady German penetration and organization. There exists what may almost be termed a "State within the State," containing parallel Nazi organizations to those of Germany and a "Court of Honour" which the German settlers, whether under secret compulsion or by choice, use in preference to those established by the law of the land.

Tanganyika, which is under the direct mandate of the British Government, consists of the greater part of what was formerly German East Africa, of which the two Western districts, known as Ruanda and Urundi, were put under Belgian administration, and united administratively with the Belgian Congo. In Tanganyika, British and German settlers are about equal in number, at a figure slightly over 3,000. Apart from the British interests which have developed in this mandated territory since

the war, the main obstacle to its return to Germany is the fact that it lies across the line of British aerial communications with South Africa.

The other two territories taken from Germany are comparatively small and insignificant, consisting of the Cameroons and Togoland, which were divided between Britain and France. Their budgets show a steady and substantial annual deficit.

For administrative purposes, the British Cameroons are attached to Nigeria, and British Togoland to the Gold Coast colony. The only white settlers, apart from Government officials, are a very small number of Germans who were there before the war.

While claiming to recover all these African colonies, the Germans declare themselves ready to take into consideration the practical difficulties of restitution. They would be satisfied, they say, with substitute areas, and when they are asked how they suggest that such areas should be acquired, they reply that that is the business of the British, French and Belgian Governments, who took away from Germany what they bluntly assert to be her property.

This same argument is advanced as a reason for the refusal to reimburse the countries now holding the mandated territories for the capital expenditure made in them during the last twenty years.

"So far as that outlay has been Governmental," say German authorities, "the capital will pass from the present colonial administration to the restored German administration. So far as it is private, the capital interest will be allowed to remain under German control."

"A rounded-out Cameroons, where we can settle some of our young men, and grow tropical products to be paid for in our own currency," was the somewhat vague answer given to me when I inquired from one of the leading men

in Germany what he had in mind as a "substitute territory." That sounded reasonable enough, until, some time later, a German Government official showed me a map upon which this "substitute territory" was depicted as embodying the whole of Nigeria, which is the largest and richest British Crown Colony, with an area of 375,000 square miles and a population of over 20,000,000.

Another suggestion came from Dr. Schacht, then President of the Reichsbank. It was that Britain and France should purchase from Portugal her West African possession of Angola, which, with an area of 490,000 square miles, is more than five times the size of the United Kingdom, but has a population of only $3\frac{1}{4}$ millions. The interior plateau of Angola would, he said, provide a settlement area for 100,000 Germans.

When I asked how the money was to be raised for this purchase, even if the Portuguese were prepared to sell, he replied: "By an international loan under the guarantee of Great Britain and the United States," and added: "I have always maintained that the last great international conference must take place in Washington before the end of President Roosevelt's term of office. He would have the satisfaction of reviving world trade by ending the European tension due to Germany's deprivation of her colonies, and under British and American guarantee there would be no difficulty in raising the money to settle the question in the way I propose. There has not been a big international loan floated for over ten years, and the world has plenty of money available."

As to the economic value of the former colonies, Dr. Schacht said that though they might at present be able only to furnish about 8 per cent. of German requirements in raw materials, the Nazi regime would soon show the world what their methods could achieve in the way of colonial development.

There can be no doubt as to the earnestness of Germany's desire to recover the lands she lost in Africa.

Resourceful as the Germans are in producing substitutes for imported products, like their famous Buna rubber, their chief purpose in devoting time and effort to these matters is to make their country immune against blockade.

Able German economists like Dr. Schacht, are not autarchists by conviction. As far back as 1934, I heard Hitler himself say that it was foolish for countries to try to produce articles for which they were not suited by nature. He declared that it might end in the air of European states being poisoned by the fumes of factories manufacturing artificial cotton, while the air of cotton-growing countries was poisoned by the fumes of their decaying plantations.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE IDES OF MARCH

WHEN the annexation of the Sudetenland which began on October 1, 1938, was followed less than six months later by the sudden seizure of the rest of the territory of the Czech Republic, the British Government and nation concluded that this step had been prepared and deliberately timed in advance.

This was only partially true. The German Government does not deny that it had hoped to make one mouthful of Sudetenland and the rest of Czecho-Slovakia. This was prevented by the unexpected intervention of Mr. Chamberlain. It became clear to the Führer from his contacts with the Prime Minister that the forcible seizure of the whole of Czecho-Slovakia would at that time entail a general war.

Hitler would have fought in October, 1938, rather than renounce the recovery of the Sudetenland, since that would have been an unmistakable diplomatic defeat for his regime. But he prefers to avoid war if he can obtain his aims by peaceful means. The annexation of Bohemia and Moravia had never appeared among his avowed objectives—the contrary was, in fact, the case. It cost him nothing to transfer to the waiting-list his plans for occupying Czecho-Slovakia. They remained in his mind as an operation to be carried out when a favourable moment presented itself.

German propaganda agents in the coveted territory were kept at work in preparing a situation suitable for this deferred action, and the German Government was

content to wait for an opportune moment before proceeding to practical measures.

The first indication that this moment was approaching took the form of a telephone-call from Bratislava, the Slovak capital, at 4 o'clock on the morning of Friday, March 10, to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin. It announced that President Hacha, of Czecho-Slovakia, had dismissed Dr. Tiso, the Slovak Premier, from office for failure to suppress the Slovak Separatist Movement in that province.

The importance of this development was recognized at once, and Herr von Ribbentrop was roused from his bed to be informed of it.

The Führer himself prefers to sleep until 10 o'clock, but when he woke the Foreign Minister was waiting to see him.

Herr Hitler agreed that President Hacha's action seemed likely to present Germany with the opportunity for which she had been waiting, but he decided that for the time being he would watch the course of events.

Throughout the day the news continued to show that a crisis in the internal affairs of Czecho-Slovakia had begun. The dismissal of the Slovak Premier, together with all the members of his Cabinet except two, was followed by orders from Prague for the arrest of the Separatist leaders, the disarming of the Slovak National Guard, and the occupation of their barracks by Czech troops.

Then came a plain opening for German intervention. The expelled Premier telegraphed to Herr Hitler protesting that he had been illegally removed from office and asking for the support of the German Government.

This appeal was accompanied by another from Dr. Karmasin, the leader of the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia. The lives and property of these Germans, he declared, were in danger from what he described as "Czech terrorism."

There was, indeed, an outbreak of bomb-explosions in Bratislava which damaged German shops and houses,

but, as Mr. Chamberlain hinted in his speech at Birmingham a day or two later, there was good reason to believe that these disturbances had been instigated by secret agents of the Reich.

Dr. Tiso's request for German support led to a first message of recall being sent to Marshal Goering, who was taking a holiday at San Remo in Italy to recover from a course of injections for the reduction of his weight. The doctors had made it a condition of the Marshal's cure that he should be entirely freed from State business, and for the first time he had left behind in Berlin a delegate with full powers to act in his name.

The need for his counsel was so great, however, that on Saturday, March 11, he got a telegram which led him to order his special train immediately. That afternoon his recall was countermanded; the same procedure was repeated next day.

The fact is that, throughout the week-end, Herr Hitler was hesitating as to whether the moment had come for him to seize Czecho-Slovakia in one swoop. His main anxiety, as he told those around him, was that "the old gentleman"—as he called Mr. Chamberlain—might get into his aeroplane and fly to Germany to intervene, as he had done in the previous autumn.

Not until the afternoon of Sunday, March 12, did the Führer make up his mind to occupy the Czech territory without further delay. On Monday morning Marshal Goering received his final summons of recall, and was informed in a cipher telegram that the German armed forces would cross the Czech frontier on Wednesday morning. He at once got into his train, and as soon as he had crossed the Italian border into Germany began to send out from it his orders for the German Air Force to co-operate in this enterprise.

Dr. Tiso, who had meanwhile been summoned to Berlin, where, despite his dismissal, the honours due to

a Prime Minister were accorded to him, was informed of Herr Hitler's intention. He returned to Bratislava. The Premier who had been appointed by President Hacha to succeed him resigned at once in his favour.

Events now followed fast upon each other. On Monday, March 13, the Czech frontier district of Mährisch-Ostrau, an important industrial area, was suddenly occupied by German troops. On the same day Ruthenia, the Easternmost province of Czecho-Slovakia, declared its independence of Prague. Hungary, who had been prevented by the German veto from occupying Ruthenia in the previous October, now received permission to do so, and her troops crossed the frontier.

It was by this time obvious to President Hacha and his Foreign Minister, Mr. Chvalkowsky, that, in trying to suppress the Slovak Separatist movement, they had brought the roof down on their own heads. The example of Dr. Schuschnigg, still sitting as a prisoner of the Gestapo in the Hotel Metropole at Vienna, no doubt occurred vividly to their minds. If it was too late to save Czecho-Slovakia, there might still be time to save themselves. They accordingly made their submission to Berlin by telegram, and were summoned to Herr Hitler's presence.

The five-feet-high, sixty-seven-year-old President, an obscure professor who had been chosen as the successor to Dr. Benes chiefly because of his colourless character and record, set off by train to the German capital with his Foreign Minister. He took with him his niece to look after him on the journey. They were received at the station in Berlin, no doubt to their surprise and relief, with all the compliments due to the Head of a State. Dr. Meissner, the Head of Herr Hitler's Presidential Staff, Baron von Dörnberg, the giant Chief of the Protocol Department of the Foreign Ministry, and the commander of the Berlin garrison were waiting on the platform, and a guard of honour was drawn up there which Dr. Hacha inspected.

He was driven to the Hotel Adlon, where further attentions awaited him in the form of sentries posted at the door, while his rooms in the hotel had been piled high with hothouse flowers.

Much has been made in Germany of the fact that while the President of the Czech Republic was still on his way to Berlin, the Prague broadcasting service announced that he intended to ask Herr Hitler to take over control of his country. If this broadcast were official, it would confirm the view suggested by President Hacha's attitude in Berlin that he had resigned himself to the inevitable before leaving home.

At the time, a number of imaginary accounts of what passed between him and the chief members of the German Government were set in circulation. It was stated that he collapsed several times during his interview with Herr Hitler, and had to be revived by injections before he could sign the document that ended the twenty-year existence of the Czecho-Slovak Republic.

No such dramatic incident occurred. Dr. Hacha, when he returned in the small hours from seeing Herr Hitler, looked quite normal, and his Ambassador in Berlin, Dr. Mastny, who had been with him throughout the evening, told the newspaper correspondents who had waited all night at the Adlon that everything had been arranged smoothly and without pressure.

What actually happened was that when President Hacha arrived at the Hotel Adlon at 10 p.m., Herr von Ribbentrop came round to see him. They discussed the terms of Czecho-Slovakia's submission for about an hour, and then the Foreign Minister sent to the Reichskanzlei, where Herr Hitler and Marshal Goering were waiting, to say that everything was settled and that Dr. Hacha was ready to sign.

Herr Hitler was passing the time by watching a cinema film, and when Dr. Meissner brought word that the Czech President was ready for his audience, he preferred not to

interrupt the film, but to see it to the end. It was not until 1 a.m., therefore, that President Hacha was brought by Herr von Ribbentrop to the Führer's presence.

He remained until 4 o'clock in the morning, and this long delay led to the dispatch of many messages that he was offering stubborn opposition.

From one who was present through it all at the Reichskanzlei I afterwards heard that the only reason for this long session was that the Führer feels at his best in the early hours of the morning, when it is his custom to deliver long dissertations to his staff upon political affairs. The surrender of Czecho-Slovakia inspired him on this occasion to an unusually lengthy survey of its probable consequences.

President Hacha had a talk alone with Herr Hitler and was then passed on to Marshal Goering, who discovered that he had not had anything to eat since leaving Prague in the afternoon. A cold supper was accordingly ordered in at 2.30 a.m.

When everything was over, and Dr. Hacha, as Head of the Czech Republic, had signed the document requesting the German Government to take his country under its protection, he turned to Marshal Goering and asked: "When will the German troops arrive in Prague? Will it be before the end of this week?"

The Marshal smiled. "My dear sir," he replied, "they are already on the way. They will be in Prague before you can get back there."

Herr Hitler can have had little sleep that night, for he left Berlin at 8 o'clock on the morning of Wednesday, March 15 by his special train, and reached the Czech frontier at dark the same afternoon. The German troops had crossed it at 6 a.m., and their first motorized detachments had been in Prague since 9 o'clock that morning.

Two German generals took control of Czecho-Slovakia with powers of martial law. Herr Buerckel, the Administrator of Austria, and Herr Henlein, Leader of the Sudeten

Germans, were attached to them as civil advisers. Dr. Hacha, who had left his country an independent State on the afternoon of March 14, returned twenty-four hours later to find it, as Marshal Goering had foretold, a German province. The amenities of his visit to Berlin had been continued to the last, for his niece was presented with a large box of chocolates on behalf of the German Government as she got into the train.

Bitter winter weather was prevailing throughout Central Europe, and the fourteen or fifteen German divisions advancing into Bohemia and Moravia had to move along icy roads through a blizzard of snow.

Their arrival took the population completely by surprise, but no resistance of any kind was offered, and the Czech troops obeyed the orders broadcast to them by the Prague Government to remain quietly in their barracks. All flying over Czech territory was forbidden to Czech or foreign aeroplanes, while several hundred German aircraft cruised to and fro in the wintry sky to enforce the ban.

The first contingent of the German Army to reach Prague was a column of motorized infantry. Crowds of Czechs lined the streets in the centre of the city, hooting, singing their National Anthem and shaking their fists. Some of the people at the back threw snowballs at the soldiers.

The Germans remained impassive under these demonstrations, looking straight in front of them with set faces, but an English onlooker told me that one could see their ears reddening as, for the first time in their experience, they were received with imprecations instead of applause.

The invading troops maintained a correct standard of behaviour during those critical early days of the Czech occupation. They had orders to avoid all incidents, and the extent to which their discipline restrained them was well indicated by an incident at the Hotel Ambassador, in Prague, of which a colleague of mine had personal knowledge.

A foreign business man, married to a Czech wife, soothed his indignation at the German occupation of the country by spending the whole day drinking in the bar. Emerging towards evening in an aggressive frame of mind, he found a German corporal washing his hands in the lavatory. There was no one else present, and moved by a sudden impulse of resentment, the foreigner took a running kick at the man as he bent forward.

The soldier's head struck the wall, and he fell to the ground dazed. Then, rising to his feet, he rather surprisingly clicked his heels, saluted and walked out of the room.

Emboldened by this success, the drunken foreigner went out into the hall of the hotel. Seeing a group of senior German officers standing together in conversation, he forced his way through them, pushing them back with thrusts of his elbows. Once again there was no resistance. He returned a moment later and repeated the same procedure. This time an officer seized him by the arm and told him to behave himself. The drunken man shouted "Take your hands off me," and used a coarse epithet about Hitler. On this the officer called up a couple of German soldiers and ordered them to march him to the Gestapo headquarters.

It was at this stage that my colleague was appealed to by the wife of the arrested man to intervene on his behalf. He went to the German Legation, where an official was sent to accompany him to the Gestapo, with the result that, to his astonishment, the prisoner was released on the ground that he was too drunk to know what he was doing.

Known Communists and anti-German writers or politicians of Czech nationality were not so fortunate. Many arrests were made on the first day of the occupation by the Czech police, acting under the directions of Gestapo officials. It was stated at the time that these were precautions taken in view of the Führer's impending arrival,

and that the captives would be released when he had gone, but there can be little doubt that the concentration camps of Germany received many new inmates from Czecho-Slovakia during the first period of the occupation, while dread of the Secret Police led to many suicides in the occupied territories.

British residents of Prague not unnaturally developed great alarm. Some sought refuge in the British Legation, where two of the Communist leaders of Czecho-Slovakia, Jantsche and Taub, also found shelter.

Three times was a train filled with British subjects, the majority of them governesses or business employees, only for their departure to be countermanded as unnecessary, and there were scenes of great confusion at the station. A consular official lost the suitcase containing all the passports of these refugees. Hurrying along the platform in search of it, he dropped all their tickets. An American photographer picked them up and ran after him, trying to attract his attention. The harassed functionary swung round with the abrupt question: "Are you a British subject?" Getting the answer "No," he exclaimed: "Then I want to have nothing at all to do with you," and rushed on, refusing even to look at the proffered tickets which he had lost.

Herr Hitler himself reached the Czech frontier at Böhmisches-Leipa by train on the afternoon of March 15, and got into a car for the two-hour drive to Prague. Through the blinding snow his column made its way along the roads, overtaking the marching troops, who were unaware that their Führer was so close to them. At seven o'clock he reached the Hradčany Palace, a great block of buildings on a steep hill, overlooking the high-pitched roofs of old Prague beyond the River Moldava.

Astonishing to relate, the Czech Guard of the palace was still on duty in the courtyard as Herr Hitler's procession drove up to the main entrance. One of his staff had to

be sent to ask the officer in command to withdraw his men. Their places were taken by the Führer's own *Leibstandarte*, of which a detachment had accompanied his procession of cars.

A few moments after he entered the building, his gold-and-crimson personal standard was hoisted on the castle roof. The annexation of Bohemia was complete.

Meanwhile Herr Hitler and his staff were mounting the broad staircase to the tapestried presidential suite of apartments. The Führer himself strode at once to the window and stood looking out through the murky darkness at the lights of the city stretched out beneath him.

Marshal Goering was right when he said in his address of welcome, on Herr Hitler's return to Berlin, that this was the crowning moment of his career. The influence that had first inspired Hitler, as an Austrian-born youth, with such enthusiasm for Germany, was the resentment felt by the Austro-Germans among whom he was brought up against the preferential treatment which they believed to be accorded by the Austro-Hungarian Government to the Slav populations living under the Dual Monarchy.

Now, at last, this grievance was avenged. Adolf Hitler stood there as the master of the greatest Slav province of his former country. He had always hated the Czechs, and now he had crushed them. All the indignation of his youth was at last satisfied, and the sweet core of that satisfaction was the thought that it was not a North German who had brought back the old capital of Kaiser Karl under German rule, but a former fellow-countryman of the Czechs themselves—an Austrian, born at Braunau and brought up at Linz.

It was at the Hradčany Palace that Herr Hitler received from Dr. Tiso, whom he had restored to office as Head of the Government of Slovakia, a telegram asking him to take the Slovak State under his protection. In a reply only a dozen words in length the Führer accepted this proposal.

I have heard from a reliable source that, two days afterwards, he expressed regret for this decision, on the ground that Slovakia would in any case have been obliged, economically and politically, to conform to German wishes, without the liability of protecting her being formally accepted. But this misgiving was probably only temporary, in view of the still unsettled conditions prevailing between Hungary and Slovakia. For the purpose of Germany's long-term policy in Central Europe the establishment of her suzerainty over Slovakia was inevitable.

None of the 1,000,000 inhabitants of Prague except a few Government officials knew that Adolf Hitler was sleeping in their midst on that night of March 15. An incident which occurred in the palace itself symbolized almost to the degree of comedy how unexpected the German occupation had been.

The keeper of the Hradčany Library had determined to put in a particularly long day's work on Wednesday, March 15. He arrived at 8 o'clock in the morning in the isolated wing of the castle where the State archives are kept. He had not turned on his wireless before leaving home, and so missed the announcement that German troops were on their way to occupy the country. He remained the whole day cut off from the outside world.

At about 8 o'clock in the evening, he left the library, and made his way down the long corridors towards the palace entrance. As he entered one of them, he saw a group of men approaching, with one walking ahead of the rest. It occurred to him that they were wearing an unfamiliar uniform, and as he advanced he looked at them more closely. To his consternation and amazement, the leading figure was Adolf Hitler's. The thought flashed into the mind of the Czech official that he must suddenly have lost his senses. Hitler in the heart of the Hradčany Palace could only be the hallucination of an overwrought brain. The librarian stopped, stared fixedly for a moment,

and then, with a loud shriek, ran back along the corridor, followed by two of Hitler's Guards, who seized the hysterically screaming man and handed him over to the palace officials.

At noon next day, Herr von Ribbentrop broadcast in Hitler's name a proclamation defining the conditions under which Czecho-Slovakia was to become a German Protectorate. This made it clear that the independence of the country had entirely disappeared, for a "Reich Protector"—to which post Baron Neurath was afterwards appointed—was to be established in Prague with power to overrule any measure of the local Government. An official residence for this German viceroy will be built on the hill by the Hradčany Palace, where at present a wireless station stands. Herr Hitler himself chose the site during his stay in Prague.

Notes of protest, challenging the legitimacy of the annexation of Czecho-Slovakia, were dispatched to the German Government by Britain and France through their embassies in Berlin. These were curtly rejected.

Then followed the Prime Minister's speech at Birmingham, in which he denounced the German action as a breach of the positive pledge, given by Herr Hitler at Munich and repeated in his Sport Palace speech, declaring that he had no desire or intention to annex the Czechs. This remonstrance also was received with contemptuous indifference. When the translation of it was handed to Herr Hitler, he read it and then said to his subordinates with a scornful laugh: "How *can* Chamberlain have missed such an opportunity to point out to the British public that Czecho-Slovakia was an impossible institution, which was bound to fall some time into German hands, and that it was better that it should do so quickly and peacefully without preliminary fuss or crisis?"

One of the most dangerous features of the present European situation is this total lack of understanding of

the British point of view on the part of the men who control the policy of Germany. Remarks made by Herr Hitler in the intimate circle of his advisers which have come to my knowledge confirm the fact that he has no comprehension of the standpoint of the British Government and people. Thus he said, while still in Prague: "When this is over, we shall be able to talk to the British on terms of complete equality. We ought to be able to reach an agreement with them,"—and he continued to elaborate and assert his desire for such an understanding at great length, evidently unaware how profoundly England's attitude towards him had been changed by his failure to fulfil his pledges to respect the integrity of Czecho-Slovakia.

With the violence of an artillery barrage, the German Press at once opened an onslaught upon the British Government, containing the first threats of that repudiation of the Naval Agreement with Great Britain which Herr Hitler announced in his Reichstag speech of April 28.

Herr Rosenberg, Germany's official authority on national philosophy, published an article in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on March 23, which Hitler said was the best he had ever read.

As an authoritative statement of Germany's attitude immediately after the annexation of Czecho-Slovakia some of the points in it are worth noting. Herr Rosenberg began by referring to Mr. Chamberlain's Birmingham speech as "an attempt of the so-called democracies to proclaim themselves protectors of peace, humanity and international morality."

He went on to say that the Prime Minister's reproaches against Germany were ill-timed in view of the fact that, at the very moment when they were made, two nations whom Britain had deceived, the Jews and the Arabs, were assembled in London for a conference with regard to a land which had only come into British hands through an act of violence.

He continued with the argument that the Peace of Versailles, dictated in the name of the highest principles of morality and permanent peace at a time when the democracies stood at the maximum of their power, had proved to be based upon the most flagrant breach of faith in world-history, and had been followed by brutal outrages against one of the most cultured nations on earth. Until the States responsible for this had made good the wrongs they had done, he declared that they had no right to speak in the name of international morality.

While the National Socialists were still striving for power in Germany, said Herr Rosenberg, they had always expressed the hope of having good relations with Britain, because they believed that no really vital problem existed to bring again into conflict two peoples who had never before fought each other. He denied that England was entitled to pose as arbiter on Central European questions. "What would be said," he asked, "if the German Chancellor were to declare, with regard to the conflict between England and Ireland, that Britain's brutal policy against the Irish had filled the entire German nation with indignation, because the British Government had not consulted the German Reich about this course of action?"

"This is a clear parallel. Moravia and Bohemia have for more than a thousand years been linked by fate to the German vital area, and it was impossible to allow these provinces to remain a centre of political and military propaganda organization in the hands of international Jewry or other enemies of the German people without the fundamental interests of the Reich being thereby imperilled. We, for our part, understand that the island of Ireland belongs to the British vital area, and that it is indispensable for England to prevent this island from being used as a base by any adversary of Great Britain. So long as other nations respect the vital interests of Germany, the German nation will be ready to respect their interests."

Herr Rosenberg went on to charge British public opinion with complete ignorance of European history. "There was a time," he said, "when France and Britain were only small nations by comparison with Germany. In those days the German Reich was, in fact, synonymous with Europe, and the German Emperor was the Protector of all Western European lands. The greatness of the German people sprang from the indestructible vitality of Germany, from its military strength and its geographical situation. . . . This situation of Germany in Europe was altered by the discovery of America. The nations living on the outskirts of Europe reached out across the oceans to seize the empty continents, and in the course of four hundred years, this development, which engendered subjective strength, caused Paris and London to look upon their own history and their own democratic principles as constituting a mission, and, indeed, as synonymous with European institutions. . . .

"At the same time as Europe was thus shut off from overseas territory, a new danger arose in the East, similar to the earlier peril of the Huns and Tartars, and, as in past centuries, the German nation found itself threatened by this Bolshevist-Asiatic movement, largely led by Jews. It had to create a barrier against it, and render harmless all those centres of infection which this poison had set up within the German vital area.

"We have always shown broad-minded comprehension of British expansion in the past. . . . But we must protest against the naïve attempt on the part of the British to identify themselves with the whole world, and to depict the blood-stained record of Great Britain as the incarnation of international morality and exemplary humanity. . . .

"Other nations must recognize that the German people, thanks to the National Socialist movement, has again grasped the basic principles of its history and, under such conditions, the German has always been invincible. He

has no sympathy for a policy such as that followed by the democracies, under which the entire earth is regarded as a sphere of economic exploitation, and peoples and territories are valued only according to their worth in diamonds, gold or oil."

The rest of the German Press dispensed with historical argument of this kind, and was content to carry out the instructions of the Propaganda Ministry by calling the British Government and people hypocrites, robbers and narrow-minded jealous intriguers in as many different ways as possible.

To this the British Press responded in some cases with equal violence. A weekly gossip paper may not perhaps represent the cream of British journalism, but for the purpose of quotation in the German Press as an example of what Fleet Street was publishing about Germany, the following passage, which was the first paragraph printed in one of them appearing on March 23, could be made to serve as well as if it had been taken from a newspaper of international standing.

"Drunk with the heady wine of power," said this publication, "Adolf Hitler hiccoughed his way to the very gates of Rumania this week with swaggering recklessness," and it referred to Hitler a few lines further down as "the greatest liar since Ananias."

Whether the cause of international peace is advanced by vituperation of this kind is an open question, but it must be admitted that the journalistic excesses of the German Press have been, to a large extent, paralleled by some of the less responsible British organs.

Having been a newspaper-man all my life, I recognize with regret that the Press of the present day tends to intensify international strain. This is a result of the greater pressure under which political news is collected and printed. That, in turn, is mainly due to the multiplication of highly-competitive news-agencies throughout Europe, which "flash"

rumours or speculative reports of any kind to London without having time to investigate them. Whereas the permanent Press Correspondents abroad used in pre-war days to be the main source of information for the newspapers they represented, their time is now largely taken up in attempting to verify the stream of agency messages constantly pouring into London from overseas.

There has developed, too, in late years, what may be called the "knowing" style of journalism. This is largely founded on the example of certain French political correspondents who, at certain times and for specific purposes, are given access to official or semi-official information reaching Paris. So greedy is the public for "inside news," and so short is its memory, that any newspaper-man who is bold enough to follow this example and write about secret diplomatic negotiations in a style of intimate knowledge can count upon making a hit with the public.

Many newspaper correspondents abroad have too much sense of responsibility to adopt this "behind the scenes" pose in dealing with political news. But those who assume it set a standard of apparent astuteness which naturally affects the whole of a competitive profession.

It is curious to remember that London newspapers which, at the time when a group of "Mayfair bandits" was the main topic of public attention, were quite unable to ascertain whether these young men in a prison five miles from their editorial offices had undergone a flogging sentence or not, are nevertheless prepared to publish with every appearance of confidence the most jealously guarded secrets of foreign capitals.

The effect upon the public of misleading foreign reports is serious enough, but they sometimes seem to influence Governments also. The circumstances under which the British guarantee to Poland was first given would appear to be an example.

This decision was taken suddenly because of rumours that strong German forces were being concentrated on the frontier of Poland, although, in announcing it to the House of Commons on March 31, Mr. Chamberlain said that the Government must not be taken as accepting the trust of these reports.

At that time Press stories of a German mobilization against Poland were circulating everywhere. The second military attaché of the British Embassy went in his car towards the Polish frontier to look for signs of such a movement, but in vain.

Inquiries made in Berlin failed to reveal any evidence of a state of affairs which was widely credited even in the highest circles in England. Yet a little reflection would have shown that it was impossible for this mobilization to take place without becoming obvious to the whole world. As the military attaché in Berlin of a Great Power not directly interested in the question said to me:

“There are two kinds of mobilization which the German Government undertakes. One where no opposition is to be expected and the other where war might be the consequence. An example of the former kind of troop-concentration was the occupation of Czecho-Slovakia in March. On that occasion no reservists were called up, nor were the units concerned put on a war-footing, because it was known that there would be no organized resistance.

“For a concentration of troops against Poland much more extensive measures would be necessary, since the German Government knows that the Polish Army would defend its territory. Such measures would be apparent to everyone. No German Army division has its own mechanized transport. It depends for its supplies upon requisitioned civilian lorries. If there had been any mobilization on the Polish frontier, the commandeering of vehicles would have been going on all over Eastern

Germany, including Berlin itself, and would have been impossible to hide. That is what happened at the time of the Munich crisis in September, 1938, when the streets of Berlin were full of cars on whose sides requisition numbers had been hurriedly painted."

The facts of Germany's ambition to dominate Eastern Europe are serious enough in themselves without the exaggeration of temporary phases of their development. Alarmist reports about measures taken by Germany have the effect of flattering German public opinion, which sees in them a proof that its Government inspires fear in the peoples of the democratic States. They also tend to confirm the deep-rooted German belief that some occult anti-German influence, which they identify with the Jews, has established a firm hold on British public opinion.

A week from the day when Germany annexed Prague, she extended her territory in another direction by taking back into the Reich the Memel area. The speed of this action surprised even the Memellanders themselves. Knowing that M. Urbisch, the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, had spent the whole afternoon in negotiation with Herr von Ribbentrop, I left Berlin for Memel, and was there on the morning of March 22, when the issue of this conference was announced. As a result of "energetic German demands," said the official German statement, the Lithuanian Government had decided "to cede Memel to Germany as the only practical solution for pacification."

Within half an hour, swastika flags were flying everywhere in this thousand-square-mile territory, with a population of 150,000, about 12 per cent. of whom were Lithuanians.

Memel is a rough-paved, featureless Baltic seaport of about 50,000 inhabitants, for which originally, under the Peace Treaty, an independent status like that of Danzig

had been intended, but which was seized by Lithuanian irregular forces in 1922.

Like Danzig, it is a characteristically German place, where Lithuanian authority had only been maintained by strict police measures, that had led to the imprisonment for long periods of the local German leaders.

Herr Hitler, who arrived next day, had devised a novel setting for his entry into this reclaimed German territory. He came by sea at the head of the largest naval squadron which had ever entered the port. It consisted of the three German "pocket battleships"—the *Deutschland*, *Graf Spee* and *Admiral Scheer*, together with three 6,000-ton cruisers, the *Nürnberg*, *Köln* and *Leipzig*, eight destroyers, nine torpedo-boats, five sloops and several minesweepers.

He was ashore only long enough to make a speech to the Memellanders from the balcony of the theatre, the largest building in the town. "I suppose you have come to see another case of German oppression," he remarked to me sarcastically in an interval of acknowledging the wild cheers of the crowd.

So ended the most profitable week that the National Socialist Government has yet experienced, for within it Bohemia and Moravia were brought within the territory of the Reich; Slovakia was made a Protectorate; the Memelland was added to East Prussia, and a commercial treaty was concluded with Rumania giving Germany a firm footing for future exploitation of the resources of that country.

As I close this book Hitler is still sailing on a strong tide of diplomatic success. Without firing a shot or losing a man, he has gained territories and benefits greater than other nations have won by victorious war. This is a process which it would be difficult to break off. Hitler is like a man on a bicycle; he must keep moving.

There is a tendency in Britain to live from speech to speech. President Roosevelt's intervention of April 15

encouraged hope. The Führer's references to the possibility of further negotiations in his speech of April 28 had a reassuring effect. No diplomatic oratory, however, can alter the fundamental facts of his determination to build up an Eastern European Empire, or change the apprehension of Britain and France that when this ambition is achieved they will be confronted by aggressive demands from a still more powerful Germany.

Such a condition of strain can hardly last much longer. The normal activities of almost every nation are so subordinated to the probability of war that a solution to the present uncertainty must soon be found. Either a *modus vivendi* will be devised by which the fast-growing strength and appetite of Germany can be peaceably adapted to the vital interests of her neighbours, or else the catastrophe for which the world is preparing will come, probably through the impact of some incident upon overstrained nerves.

This danger is increased by the ardour of feeling which complicates and intensifies the existing antagonism. The British and French nations, with their associates, are moved to strong indignation by the ruthlessness of German methods. The Germans are convinced that a jealous conspiracy exists to prevent their country from fulfilling what they believe to be its destiny. As the German philosopher, Hegel, has said: "The conflict between right and wrong is not so tragic as that between right and right." In Europe, the sense of right prevails on both sides.

There are only three ways in which the present situation can develop. The first is that the Western Powers should acquiesce in Germany's aims—protesting, perhaps, but not resisting. The second is that, thanks to the initiative of President Roosevelt or some other intermediary, an international conference should assemble, at which, contrary to the experience of the past, a solution acceptable to all parties were found. The third and most probable develop-

ment is war. It is not likely that Germany will declare war upon the Western Powers. Rather is it to be expected that, by pursuing her expansionist aims, she will one day place the Governments of Britain and France in the position of having to declare war on her.

The only development satisfactory to all parties would be the second. If it is to be realized, the statesmen of all the countries concerned will need to adopt a more courageous, constructive and practical policy than they have followed hitherto.

Words, in the form of speeches, protests and declamatory Notes, are ineffective to check the mighty current of power-politics pouring out of the reservoir within which the forces of the German nation were for fifteen years confined by the dam of the Treaty of Versailles.

It is Herr Hitler's ambition to live in history as a bloodless conqueror. He would rather win by statecraft than by war. He has no desire to share the glory, even of a German victory, with his own generals. Up to the present, his successes have been due to his own political skill, with the armed might of Germany acting only as a rearguard.

The danger to world-peace lies in the possibility that the relentless pursuit of his aims by political pressure may some day encounter resistance on the part of one of the States which are its objectives. It was significant that, in replying to President Roosevelt's inquiry as to whether he would declare that he had no intention of attacking certain countries, Herr Hitler announced his readiness to give such a pledge subject to the condition that the nations in question approached him individually "with appropriate proposals."

In a speech otherwise unmistakably clear this was the one vague passage. Such "appropriate proposals" would doubtless include acceptance of economic subordination to Germany, together with the undertaking to follow a foreign policy adapted to her interests.

The future of European civilization now depends on one issue. If, by an effort of statesmanship without precedent in history, the leading Powers of the world can devise some means of conceding peacefully to Germany the greater scope which she demands, Europe may be able to settle down to another period of security, in which political ambitions might soon be relegated to the background of the world's attention by a general outburst of long-pent-up commercial and industrial activity.

Should this difficult achievement prove beyond the capacity of the Governments concerned, the conflict of aims and interests now dividing Europe will almost inevitably reach its climax in war.

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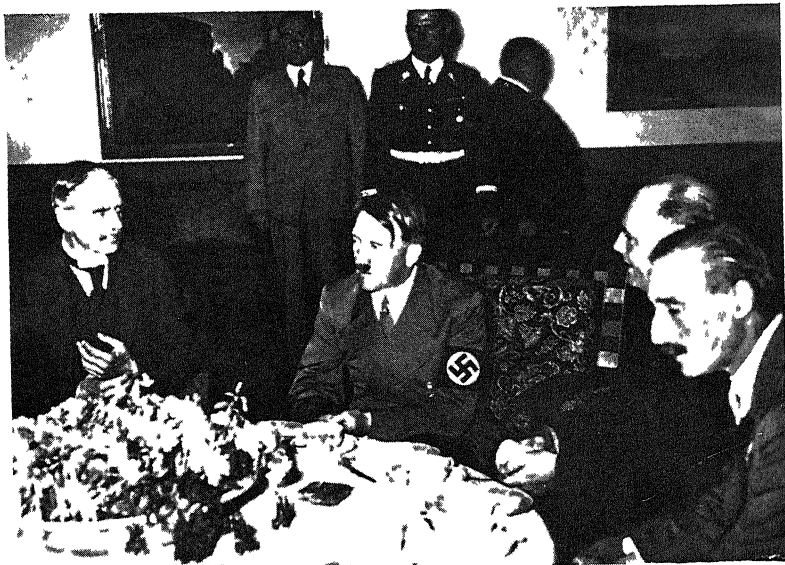
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THE FIRST CONTACT AT BERCHTESGADEN



We, the German Führer and Chancellor and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting today and are agreed in recognising that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe.

We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.

Handwritten signature of Neville Chamberlain

Neville Chamberlain

September 30, 1938

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